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Teachers' perceptions of and interventions in episodes of bullying in schools

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AND

INTERVENTIONS IN EPISODES OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

by

Carynn Townsend Wiggins, B. A., M.Ed.

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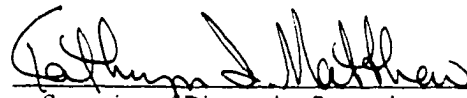
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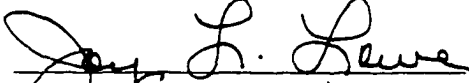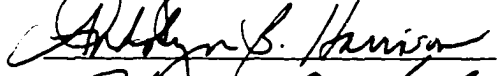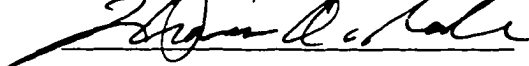
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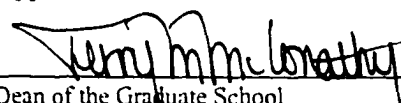
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ABSTRACT

Bullying, defined as the repeated exposure of a less powerful person to negative actions by a more powerful person or group of people, is a serious problem in schools. There are often severe negative consequences, both short-term and long-term, for both the victim and the bully. The attitudes of teachers play a major role in determining the extent and the acceptance of bullying in schools.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the perceptions of selected teachers in reference to bullying. Six teachers were chosen from regional and state teacher of the year competition during 1998-2000. In addition, six teachers who had not been recognized as teachers of the year from the same schools and comparable grade levels were asked to participate in the study. The teachers were interviewed using 16 questions specifically designed to provide in-depth information regarding each teacher's perceptions of the extent of the problem and successful intervention strategies implemented to eliminate the problem. In addition, the teachers were asked to supply pertinent demographic data. All responses were recorded in written and audiotape recorded format. The audiotapes were transcribed into verbatim accounts of each inquiry session. The researcher employed the grounded theory approach to the qualitative analysis of the data which showed that teachers had a limited understanding of bullying and its consequences.

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Participants in the study stated that school violence could be caused by bullying and offered suggestions for eliminating this behavior. Teachers stated that they were not aware of any professional development activities on this topic, expressing a need for opportunities to learn more about this topic.

Given these findings, the researcher suggests the need for ongoing professional development activities on the topic for all teachers. Schools should conduct surveys of stakeholders to determine the extent of bullying within their own setting and implement school-wide interventions targeted at eliminating this type of behavior. Teachers should establish parameters for acceptable behavior at the very beginning of the school term, conveying the message that bullying will not be tolerated. Teachers need to make an effort to get to know their students as individuals and demonstrate that they, as teachers, value diversity within the classroom and school. Teachers are the key in that they set the parameters for what is acceptable behavior, determining whether bullying is allowed to continue.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful family without whose love and support it would not have been possible. To my husband, Ronnie, thanks for all the times you filled in for me, all the details you took care of, all the clutter you overlooked. To my children, Jordan, Brennan, and Madison, thanks for enduring all the times I was not present, in body or mind. To my parents, Betty and Carroll Townsend, thanks for your unfailing encouragement that I could indeed do this. To all of you—your love, your support, your faith in me, it sustained me throughout the process. I am eternally grateful.

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This dissertation could not have been completed without the assistance of many people. I was blessed with a wonderfully supportive committee. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my major professor, Dr. Kathy Matthew, without whose guidance I would never have finished. I knew if I did not provide those periodic updates, I would hear from her, "What's going on? What are you doing?" She never pushed me, but she made certain that I was "adequately motivated" to keep working. Anytime she found an article on my topic, she delivered a copy of it. Anytime I had a question about the research process, she found resources to aid me. She was the epitome of a major professor. I only wish every doctoral student could be so fortunate.

To the rest of my committee, Dr. Tom Rakes from University of Louisiana at Monroe, Dr. Andolyn Harrison from Grambling State University, and Dr. Joy Lowe from Louisiana Tech University, thanks for all your support and encouragement during this process. Your suggestions guided my research, even when I was unsure of the path myself. Your expertise was invaluable in its completion.

I shall always be indebted to my friend and mentor, Dr. Cathy Stockton, for encouraging me to begin this process and providing the support necessary to see it to fruition. I can honestly say, that without her unfailing support, this would have never come to pass.

To my study partners, Kay Bradford and Libby Manning, thanks for being there for me throughout the process. To Kay, thanks for all the proofreading expertise. I am anxiously awaiting the completion of your dissertations as well. I only wish that we could have finished this race as we began it—together.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

Due to acts of violence perpetrated against children by children in our nation in recent years, there has been increasing concern over the safety of America's schoolchildren. In 1993, the National Education Goals Panel included as one of the six national education goals, that "by the year 2000, every school in America would be free of drugs and violence and would offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" (U. S. Department of Education, 1991). In spite of this lofty goal, violence continues to plague America's schools. A critical factor in school safety and climate is the interpersonal relationship between individuals and groups of students. To measure progress toward reaching the goal of safe schools, it is necessary to identify the incidence and causes of aggression or violence in the schools and the extent of fear of that violence among students (Nolin, Davies, & Chandler, 1996).

In the past, the definition of school violence has been limited to acts of assault, theft, and vandalism. Batsch and Knoff (1994) posited that this definition should be extended to include conditions or acts that create a climate in which students or teachers feel fear or intimidation. This definition would include bullying and would greatly expand the discussion of violence and safety in the schools.

Bullying in schools is a serious problem. While estimates of incidence vary, it is believed that close to 20% of American school children are directly involved as either victims or bullies. These figures do not take into account the

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large number of children who serve as witnesses to the event, often seeing bullies go unpunished. Bullying often creates a climate of fear which serves as a deterrent to learning (Ross, 1996). A teacher can play a key role in determining the extent of bullying in the classroom and, to a lesser degree, on the school campus. The manner in which the teacher tolerates or punishes this type of behavior sets the parameters for the acceptance of bullying. School personnel are often unaware of the extent of the problem or are reluctant to acknowledge its existence. In addition, other school personnel believe that it is a character-building experience and will resolve itself with few negative consequences. The end result of these attitudes is a school environment which allows the phenomenon to flourish (Ross, 1996).

Olweus (1993) reported that approximately 40% of bullied students in the primary grades and almost 60% of bullied students in secondary/junior high schools reported that teachers had tried to end bullying only occasionally or almost never. About 65% of students bullied in primary schools stated that the teacher had not talked to them about bullying. That figure was as high as 85% for those students bullied in secondary/junior high school. Almost the same results were reported from students who bullied others. Thus, it seems evident that teachers do relatively little to put a stop to bullying at school. Overall, Olweus reported dramatic differences among schools and among teachers.

No person in school spends more time with students than the teacher. Hazler (1996) stated that this extensive involvement makes the teacher the most visible model for either positive or negative behavior. Teachers have a significant influence on how children see and relate to others. Effective teacher actions will be those that encourage positive behaviors, discourage negative

behaviors, and provide opportunities for students to practice and reflect on desired behaviors. According to Hazler (1996), teachers must be supported in their efforts to put a stop to bullying. The three main categories of support are: (a) an organized program in which to work; (b) a support system that is available when needed; and (c) a set of realistic boundaries on the roles and responsibilities expected of teachers.

Bullying is an intentional, purposeful act that can be controlled only through strong commitment and concerted action on the part of all involved: school personnel and other professionals, parents, and children (Ross, 1996). To end bullying, the goal is to gather research and other findings on childhood bullying and victimization along with the kinds of intervention that have proven effective or that have the potential for combating these problems.

Given that the majority of the research on the topic of bullying has been done outside the United States (Hoover, Oliver, & Thomson, 1993; Oliver, Hoover, & Hazler, 1994), additional studies need to be done in this country. Research has shown that bullying in this country is a problem both in terms of prevalence and perceived trauma (Hoover, Oliver, & Thomson, 1993). While acknowledging that bullying exists is the first step in addressing the issue, it does little to actually solve the problem.

<u>Purpose of the Study</u>

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of selected teachers in reference to the topic of bullying. Little research has been conducted in the United States on the topic of bullying. The research that has been conducted has focused primarily on the bully/victim relationship or the types of school-wide interventions. No research was found

that examined the role of the teacher in the intervention process. Given the research findings that the teacher sets the parameters which determine the extent of this phenomenon, it was determined that this was an area that warranted study.

Regional and state teacher of the year winners were selected for participation in this study due to the fact that these teachers had already been judged by their peers to be outstanding representatives in the field of education. In addition, teachers not formally designated as outstanding in the same schools and working in comparable grade levels were also selected to participate in the study. These teachers have not been recognized as teachers of the year and served as a contrast to those teachers selected for their award-winning status. Input from these teachers was of benefit in gaining information about the topic. In addition to the teachers' opinions of the extent of the problem, the researcher inquired as to the successful intervention strategies implemented by the teachers in their efforts to reduce or eliminate the problem.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study:

1. To what degree do teachers view bullying as a problem in their schools and classrooms?

2. What interventions have teachers introduced or implemented that have made a difference in dealing with the problem of bullying?

Significance of the Study

According to Vest (1999), information gathered in the 1997 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health showed that having positive

relationships with teachers is the most important educational factor in protecting teenagers from harmful behavior. Vest stressed that teachers of children of all ages have both the ability and opportunity to make a tremendous difference in the lives of children. The role of the teacher cannot be underestimated in determining the educational climate necessary to foster learning. Research has consistently shown the negative consequences of bullying for all involved no matter the active or passive role they play. School personnel must realize the necessity of proactive behavior in addressing this issue. Incidences in Pearl, Mississippi; Paducah, Kentucky; Jonesboro, Arkansas; and Littleton, Colorado have proven that if interventions do not occur, reactive measures are simply a case of too little, too late.

Teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and routines play a major role in determining the extent to which problems will be manifested in a school or classroom (Olweus, 1995). According to research by O'Moore (2000), teachers in 25% of primary schools and 51% of secondary schools do not recognize bullying as a serious issue.

<u>Theoretical Model</u>

The dialectical conceptual framework study of Twemlow, Sacco, and Williams (1996) will be used as the theoretical model for this study. This framework emphasizes the interpersonal and independent nature of the roles of bully, victim, and bystander often observed in school violence, with the goal of affording early and vigorous intervention and consultation opportunities with teachers and school administrators. These authors posited that when bullies dominate and teachers become bystanders, or even victims, violence results in

the disruption of academics and a reliance on reactive rather than proactive measures to prevent the occurrence of this phenomenon.

Twemlow, Sacco, and Williams (1996) defined bullying as the repeated exposure to negative interactions on the part of one or more dominant persons, who gain in some way from the discomfort of the victims. The negative actions are intentional inflictions of injury or discomfort and may involve physical contact, words, or insulting gestures. There is an imbalance of strength with victims having difficulty defending themselves. Bullying may take one of two forms: direct, such as physical conflict, or indirect, such as ostracism, teasing, or other form of social isolation. The relationship between the bully and the victim is a classical dialectic in that neither side has any meaning without the other. However, power can shift to either side of the dialectical relationship depending on the dynamic conditions affecting the components. One such condition would be the presence of a bystander who could clearly influence the pathological victim-bully balance. Pathological patterns evolve when there are few positive role models provided by either students or school personnel. These students or school personnel can assume one of the roles in the bully-victim-bystander triad. When bullies are allowed to dominate and teachers play the role of either victim or bystander, the school climate will be severely disrupted. When positive role models are present, the culture of violence can be transformed into a positive culture conducive to learning.

Assumptions

For the purposes of this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. Selected teachers would understand the the purpose of the study and would answer to the best of their ability; and

2. Teachers would answer the questions honestly.

Limitations

The boundaries of this study were:

1. Participants were limited to six elementary/middle school teacher of the year regional and state winners from Louisiana during the past five years and six teachers not recognized as teachers of the year from the same school and comparable grade level;

2. Participants in the study may or may not have been representative of the population of other teachers;

3. Findings were based on the perceptions of the participants.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are given to promote understanding of the terms used in this study:

Assistant. A participant "who physically helps the bully" (Cowie, 2000, p. 86).

Bully. Person who "tends to be involved in a range of antisocial and aggressive behaviors and, contrary to popular belief, is not insecure, cowardly, or friendless" (Pearce & Thompson, 1998, p. 528).

Bullying. A situation in which a student is "exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (Olweus, 1993, p. 9). "An additional criterion of bullying is an imbalance of strength (an

asymmetric power relationship): The student who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending himself or herself" (Olweus, 1995, p. 197).

Bystanders. "People who stand on the sidelines and do not get involved" (Hazler, 1996, p. 11).

Defenders. Students who provide assistance to the victim through "supportive, consoling side-taking with the victim as well as active efforts to make others stop bullying" (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996, p. 4).

Externalizing difficulties. Behaviors that "serve to irritate and provoke other children, such as disruptiveness, ineffectual aggression, and argumentativeness" (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997, p. 1032).

Harassment. "A term that is frequently used as a synonym for bullying and to some extent its use is culturally determined. In Britain the term 'bullying' is used more frequently than in the United States where the term 'harassment' is more popular" (Rigby, 1996, p. 21).

Instrumental aggression. An aggressive act "having a nonsocial goal, such as object acquisition" (Horne & Socherman, 1996, p. 79).

Internalizing difficulties. Behavior patterns in which children "behave in ways that invite or reinforce attacks against them." Children with internalizing difficulties often "cry easily, are manifestly anxious, lack humor, lack self-confidence and self-esteem, and use ineffectual persuasion tactics" (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997, p. 1032).

Negative actions. An action that occurs when "someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another" (Olweus, 1993, p. 9).

Overt aggression. Behavior that "harms others through physical damage or the threat of such damage (e.g., pushing, hitting, kicking, or threatening to beat up a peer)" (Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997, p. 579).

Passive/submissive victims. Victims characterized by internalizing difficulties. These victims are described as "anxious, insecure, appearing to do nothing to provoke attacks, and appearing not to defend themselves" (Batsche & Knoff, 1994, p. 167).

Peer rejected. "The degree to which a child is generally disliked by peers" (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997, p. 1033).

Proactive. "Action to prevent bullying. A preventive approach consists of, among other things, raising the topic with the pupils and their parents and subsequently laying down rules" (Limper, 2000, p. 127).

Provocative victims. Victims who display a hostile style of social interaction. These victims are described as "hot-tempered, restless, and anxious, and ones who will attempt to retaliate when attacked" (Batsche & Knoff, 1994, p. 167).

Reactive. Measures undertaken in response to bullying behavior which include "a reliance on punishment and surveillance or other ineffective modes of discipline" (Twemlow et al., 1996).

Reactive aggression. "A hostile act in response to a perceived provocation" (Horne & Socherman, 1996, p. 79).

Reinforcers. Students present at the bullying episode who "tend to act in ways which reinforce the bullying behavior, like laughing, coming to see what is happening, and being present, thus providing an 'audience' for the bully, inciting the bully, etc." (Salmivalli et al., 1996, p. 4).

Relational aggression. A type of aggressive behavior that "harms others through damage to their peer relationships (e.g., using social exclusion or rumor spreading as a form of retaliation)" (Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997, p. 579).

Teasing. "Destructive verbal attacks that are usually, but not always, repeated over time, the general goal being to create increasing misery in the victim" (Ross, 1996, p. 162).

Victim. Person who serves as target for repeated bullying behavior due to the fact that "the victim cannot defend himself or herself easily, for one or more reasons: He or she may be outnumbered, smaller or less physically strong, or less psychologically resilient than the person doing the bullying" (Smith & Brain, 2000, p. 1).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of selected subjects in reference to the topic of bullying. The researcher attempted to determine these perceptions of the extent of the problem and successful intervention strategies implemented to eliminate its existence. Literature on bullying was reviewed in order to better understand the phenomenon. While bullying has existed for centuries, the study of the issue has only been undertaken in recent decades. The majority of the research has been conducted in countries outside the geographic boundaries of the United States. America has been slow to embrace the idea that this phenomenon has negative consequences for all involved and must be eliminated. This review is divided into 13 topical sections beginning with a definition of the phenomenon.

Definition of Bullying

Investigations of the bullying phenomenon have been complicated by the fact that there is no universally accepted operational definition of bullying, and that the terminology is considered by some to be variable and imprecise (Glover, Cartwright, & Gleeson, 1998; Swain, 1998). Bullying has generally been defined as repeated exposure, extending over a period of time, to negative actions or treatment by a more powerful person or group of people (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Hazler, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, Cox, & Black, (1997). A negative action has been described as one in which a person inflicts or attempts to inflict injury or discomfort on another (Olweus, 1993). The abuse

is not necessarily physical. It can be any form of unwarranted aggression, carried out through the use of words, physical contact, gestures, or actions such as deliberate isolation (Olweus, 1993; Rigby et al., 1997). Bullying has also been referred to as "educational battering" and can lead to violent and disastrous consequences for both victims and bullies (Hazler, 1994).

Bullying has been found to involve (a) an imbalance of strength–either physical or psychological, (b) a deliberate intention to harm the victim, and (c) repeated occurrences over time (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Borg, 1999; Craig, 1998; Olweus, 1993; Olweus, 1994; Olweus, 1995; Slee, 1993; Slee & Rigby, 1994). Another factor mentioned by Olweus (1994) is that the bullying behavior occurs without apparent provocation. Bullying has also been defined as the systematic abuse of power in which the victim cannot easily defend himself or herself for one or more reasons: he or she may (a) be outnumbered, (b) be smaller or possess less physical strength, or (c) be less psychologically resilient than the perpetrator (Smith, 1997; Smith & Brain, 2000). Olweus stressed that the term bullying should not be used when two students of approximately the same strength, both physical and psychological, are quarreling or fighting. The bullying interaction is influenced by several factors: (a) the individual characteristics of the bully and the victim, (b) the dyadic interactional processes between the individual bully and victim, (c) the presence of teachers and peers, and (d) the context in which the bullying episode occurs.

Types of Bullying

Researchers have identified two basic types of bullying–overt aggression and relational aggression. Overt aggression, often referred to as direct bullying, has been defined as behavior that harms others through physical damage or

the threat of such damage with relatively open attacks on the victim (Crick, 1997; Olweus, 1994; Tomado & Schneider, 1997). Overt aggression is far more frequently attributed to boys (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999; Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997; Tomado & Schneider, 1997).

Relational aggression, often referred to as indirect bullying, harms others through damage to or manipulation of their peer relationships (Crick, 1995; Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996; Crick et al., 1997; Crick et al., 1999; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996). These acts of relational aggression are viewed by children as commonly occurring aggressive events within their peer groups, particularly for the interaction of girls with other girls (Crick et al., 1996). Examples of this type of aggression would be spreading rumors about the victim so that peers will reject him or her, withholding friendship, and excluding the victim from a group or event (Crick et al., 1997; Crick et al., 1999).

When attempting to inflict harm on others, children do so in ways that are most likely to damage the social goals of the victim. Boys are more likely to use physical forms of aggression that hinder the dominance goals characteristic of boys; girls are more likely to use relational aggression, considered more effective in hindering the afillitative, intimacy goals characteristic of girls (Crick et al., 1997). Relationally aggressive acts serve as effective means for gaining control or retaliating against another girl given recent evidence that girls are more distressed by these acts than boys (Crick, 1996). Research has suggested that girls are more likely to use social aggression because children's friendships are often segregated by gender (Boulton, 1996), and friendships among girls take place in smaller groups and are more exclusive than boys' friendships (Galen & Underwood, 1997).

Research has indicated significant gender and age-related differences in the prevalence of overt and relational aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick et al., 1999; Bjorkqvist, 1994). Boys have often been shown to be more overtly aggressive and less relationally aggressive than girls, and older children have been shown to be less overtly aggressive than younger children (Crick & Grotpeter). This is not to imply that young children do not engage in relationally aggressive activities. When preschoolers engage in relationally aggressive acts, they tend to do so in direct ways involving a current situation. In contrast, older children use more complex, subtle forms of relational aggression reflecting a response to a past act or perceived slight (Crick et al.). In young children lacking verbal skills, overt aggression is the dominant form. As verbal skills develop, they are used not only for peaceful communication but for aggressive purposes as well. As young children develop social skills, more sophisticated strategies of aggression are made possible, with the aggressor being able to harm the victim without even being identified (Bjorkqvist).

According to Horne and Socherman (1996), there are two additional types of aggression: reactive aggression, which is a hostile act as a reaction to a perceived provocation, and instrumental aggression, which is defined as having a nonsocial goal such as the acquisition of an object. Reactive aggression may have been the motivating factor behind recent school killings in places such as Jonesboro, Arkansas and Littleton, Colorado. Charles Grodin, MSNBC talk show host pointed to the common thread in all these tragedies: bullying (Oldenburg, 1999).

History of Research on Bullying

Bullying among schoolchildren, while recognized as a major problem only within the past two decades, is a problem that has been recognized for centuries. Accounts of bullying are found in literary works such as *Oliver Twist* (Dickens, 1888), *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1962), and *Tom Brown's School Days* (Hughes, 1918). The phenomenon began to be systematically studied by Olweus in Scandinavia in the early 1970s. While society as a whole seemed concerned with the phenomenon, school authorities did not seem to share this worry. This lack of concern changed, however, in 1982 when the media reported that three 10 to 14-year-old boys from the northern part of Norway had committed suicide, in all probability as a consequence of severe bullying by peers. These events triggered a chain of events which culminated in a nationwide campaign against bullying in Norwegian schools (Olweus, 1993). This was the first example of a national intervention campaign against bullying (Smith & Brain, 2000.) In the 1980s and the early 1990s, other nations such as Japan, the United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, and the United States began to systematically study the problem of bullying in their own nations (Hoover, Oliver, & Thomson, 1993; Olweus, 1994; Ortega & Lera, 2000; Rigby, 1996). The majority of research on bullying has concentrated on overt aggression with little emphasis given to relational aggression until the 1990s (Crick, 1995; Fry & Gabriel, 1994).

Extent of the Problem

Bullying may be the most prevalent form of violence in the schools and the form that is most likely to affect the greatest number of students (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Oliver, Young, and LaSalle (1994) posited that between 80 % to

90% of adolescents and preadolescents will at some point in their school life face ongoing psychological or physical harassment. Aggression typically occurs in social contexts in which teachers and parents are generally unaware of the extent of the problem. Other children seem to be reluctant to get involved or do not understand how to help in the situation (Banks, 1997). Approximately one third of all violent crimes against youths are ever reported to authorities (Beane, 1999). The definite number of students involved in the bully-victim process is difficult to ascertain. However, the statement that 15% to 20% of all students will experience some form of bullying during their school years is supported by the current literature (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Atlas and Pepler (1998) estimated that between 7% to 34 % of school-aged children are involved in bullying occasionally during the school term in either the bully or victim role.

The incidence of bully-victim problems is dependent on how the phenomenon is defined and the instrument used to measure it (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Common methods of assessment include peer group nominations, teacher estimates, and self-reports (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Slee, 1993; Slee & Rigby, 1994). The anonymous questionnaire, supplemented by peer nomination is considered to be the best method of data collection (Austin & Joseph, 1996). A criticism of the method could be that focusing a child's attention on the subject of victimization could increase the possibility that the child would respond in a socially desirable way (Neary & Joseph, 1994). Crick and Grotpeter (1996) stated a preference for self-reporting as opposed to peer-reporting in that it allows children to report incidences of victimization that occur outside the classroom and by provocateurs who are not classmates. Boulton (1996, 1999) and Williams and Schaller (1993) suggested the addition of

observation as an evaluation tool for assessment of peer interactions. Rigby (1996) posited that there are basically three methods of assessment: (a) direct observation; (2) questioning those who have observed it taking place; and (3) asking those students who are directly involved. The variations in the forms of data collection has created methodological problems in comparing findings on the subject of bullying (Borg, 1999).

Research indicates a high prevalence of bullying in schools throughout the world (Tritt & Duncan, 1997). Stimulated largely by the research of Olweus in Scandinavian countries, studies have been undertaken in other countries. The numbers of children who have been been identified as victims of bullying range from 10% in Australia (Rigby & Slee, 1991) to 20% in Canada (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995). Olweus recently stated that recent data collected through use of his Bully/Victim Questionnaire in a number of countries, including the United States, indicate high prevalence rates. Applying the percentages found in Olweus' Scandinavian research to the United States school population, a conservative estimate would be that five million students in grades one through nine are involved in bully-victim problems during an average school year. Hoover and Oliver (1996) echoed Olweus' estimation that the bullying problem appears to be more severe in the United States than in any of the Western European countries, with the possible exception of Great Britain. In a study of middle school students in a suburb of Indianapolis, Indiana, researchers determined that 80% of the students reported that they had bullied another classmate in the last 30 days (Portner, 1999). Approximately 20% of middle school students have reported that bullying has negatively affected their ability to learn and pay attention in school (Hoover & Anderson, 1999). O'Moore

(2000) reported evidence that teachers tend to underestimate the level of bullying that occurs, identifying only 24% of the total number of bullies. America's decentralized education system and a reluctance on the part of administrators to report violent acts compounds the problem of determining the extent of bullying (Haynie, Alexander, & Walters, 1997).

According to Smith and Brain (2000), research suggests that any school can anticipate bullying occurring with varying degrees of severity. A study by Hazler, Hoover, & and Oliver (1991) suggested that 20% or more of all children attending school are frightened throughout the school day, with a great majority of students (88%) reporting that they had observed bullying during their school careers. Both victims and bullies reported that the two places where bullying most often takes place are the classroom and the playground (Borg, 1999; Smith, 1997). When asked to identify the grade level in which victims are most severely bullied, students rated grades seven through nine as the most prevalent (47%), grades four through six as second most prevalent (31%), grades one through three third (13%), and grades nine through twelve as least prevalent (9%) (Hazler et al., 1991).

In a study developed to understand what children ages seven to twelve worry about, Silverman, LaGreca, and Wasserstein (1995) found that personal harm emerged as a central concern of children. Worry about physical harm or attack by others was the single most frequent response reported. One of the biggest worries of children moving up from primary to secondary school is that they will be bullied in the new situation (Eslea & Smith, 1998).

The general trend is for boys both to bully and be bullied more than girls (Banks, 1997; Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Kumpulainen et

al., 1998; Siann, Callaghan, Glissov, Lockhart, & Rawson, 1994). This statement was disputed by the research of Atlas and Pepler (1998) who found, in a study of children in grades one through six, that boys and girls bullied at about the same rate. The probability of being involved in bullying episodes was found to be higher in rural and semirural areas than in the cities (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Hettonen, 1999; Olweus, 1993). Females in rural areas were found to be more likely to be involved in bullying episodes than females in the cities, a surprising finding given that rural areas are usually viewed as favorable for children (Kumpulainen et al., 1999). The size of the class or school appears to be of negligible importance for the relative frequency or severity of bully/victim problems (Olweus, 1993). An important characteristic of bullying is that bullies engage in the aggressive behavior only as long as they are able to get away with it with little or no punishment (Horne & Socherman, 1996). Socioeconomic status seems to have no relationship with bullying behavior.

Consequences of Bullying

Bullying has been regarded by some as a trivial problem, because its its effects are seen as short term and easily shrugged off. Still others have claimed that bullying has positive effects, building character and preparing students to compete successfully in life (Rigby, 1996). In fact, many adults consider bullying and enduring its consequences to be a normal part of growing up. Young people who have reported being victims of bullying overwhelmingly (90%) believed that it caused them problems (Hazler, Oliver, & Hoover, 1992). Although most victims of bullies experience little, if any, physical injury, the impact on that student's fear and anxiety levels may have much greater consequences (Hazler et al., 1991). The experience of victimization has been

linked to several negative adjustment indexes such as loss of self esteem (Rigby, 1996; Rigby & Slee, 1999), anxiety, depression, loneliness (Boivin, Hymel, & Bukowski, 1995; Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Egan & Perry, 1998; Hoover & Anderson, 1999), school avoidance (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1992; Eslea & Smith, 1998; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Rigby, 1996; Slee & Rigby, 1994; Smith, 1992; Vail, 1999), poor academic performance (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Vail, 1999), peer rejection, and a limited number of friends (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997; Rigby, 1996). In addition, victimized children are less happy in school (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Slee & Rigby, 1993) and display lower levels of school liking (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). Victimized children are quite often rejected by the general peer group, especially in adolescence (Graham & Juvonen, 1998).

There is also evidence to support the idea that the psychological maltreatment associated with bullying increases the risk for the development of serious behavioral or emotional disorders such as habit disorders, neurotic traits, psychoneurotic traits, behavior extremes, overly adaptive behaviors, lags in development, and suicide attempts (Neese, 1989). Low psychological well-being, as evidenced in severe cases by suicidal ideation, is commonly viewed by students as a consequence of peer victimization (Rigby & Slee, 1999). Chronic victims have been known to take brutal revenge on their tormentors, bringing a weapon to school for self-defense or retaliation (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 1997; Hazler, 1994; Oliver, Hoover, & Hazler, 1994). Long-term negative consequences fall into three main categories: delinquency, school drop-out, and psychopathology (Coie & Cillessen, 1993). As adults, many victims of chronic peer abuse experienced

difficulty in establishing intimate relationships (Gilmartin, 1987). Parker and Asher (1987), in their study of middle level learners, found that from 28% to 70% of disordered adults showed a history of problematic peer relationships as young people.

There are consequences, sometimes delayed, for bullies as well as victims. Young people who bully others have been found to be at increased risk for problems such as criminality and alcohol abuse (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; Olweus, 1993). Adults who were identified as bullies as children were more likely to experience marital problems and to commit child and spousal abuse (Hoover & Anderson, 1999).

Characteristics of Bullies

The popular stereotype of a bully is that of a physically powerful, simpleminded boy who resorts to violence and aggression as a method of goal attainment (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). This characterization may be far from the reality. At the primary level, bullies enjoy about average popularity, though this popularity has been found to wane as students progress through school. However, a bully never seems to reach the low level of popularity typical of the child who is victimized (Olweus, 1993). In direct contrast to popularly held views, bullies do not suffer from poor self-esteem, showing instead unusually low levels of anxiety and insecurity (Olweus, 1994; Pearce & Thompson, 1998). Bullies demonstrate a more positive attitude towards violence than do students in general. They are often characterized by poor impulse control and a strong need to dominate others (Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Lagerspetz, 1998). They seem to enjoy being in control and subduing others. They have little, if any, empathy with their victims (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997; Olweus, 1994; Olweus,

1995). Bullies often misread the intentions of others and assume hostile intentions when there were none (Lochman, 1992). Bullies also tend to be aggressive toward adults, regardless of their position of authority (Olweus, 1995; Pearce & Thompson, 1998). Bullies' aggressive attitudes and values are often at odds with the majority of students, who are nonaggressive, and the general ethos of the school. This leads to the rejection of aggressive students by their peers and a negative appraisal by teachers. This general social rejection often pushes bullies to associate with other aggressive children (Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999). It is possible that bullies are not condemned as much as other aggressive children because they do not pick on others indiscriminately, reserving their aggression for those students who they perceive as weak, unpopular, unwilling or unable to retaliate (Hoover & Hazler, 1991).

Characteristics of Victims

An assumption about victims of bullies has been that many victimized children behave in ways that invite and reinforce attacks against them. Indeed, many children do exhibit behaviors that probably signal that they would be unable to successfully defend themselves against attacks: They cry easily, are obviously anxious, and tend to reward their attackers by easily submitting and relinquishing resources (Boivin & Hymel, 1997; Egan & Perry, 1998; Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Perry, Williard, & Perry, 1990; Schwartz, Dodge, & Coie, 1993). Victims tend to possess low self esteem and feelings of of loneliness, unhappiness, and insecurity more often than their nonvictimized counterparts (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Olweus, 1994; Olweus, 1995; Pearce & Thompson,1998).

Victimized children often appear to be physically weak and lack the social competencies that would make them more highly valued members of their peer group. These competencies include friendliness, cooperativeness, and a sense of humor (Egan & Perry, 1998). Victims have also been found to be less verbally skilled than nonvictimized children (Horne & Socherman, 1996). Compounding the victim's self-perceived adjustment problems is the finding that victimized children are often rejected by their peer group, especially in early adolescence (Graham & Juvonen, 1998). Victims often feel lonely and abandoned in school and, as a rule, do not have a single friend (Hodges et al., 1997; Olweus, 1994).

Middle school and high school students indicated that victims were most often bullied because of their religion or because they simply "did not fit in" with the group (Tritt & Duncan, 1997). In a study by Hoover and Oliver (1996), males and females of all ages selected the statement "I [or they] just didn't fit in," as the most common reason for being bullied. Characteristics thought to be associated with bullying were typically associated with either appearance or social status. Female students have stated that they were abused by peers due to rumors that they were sexually promiscuous. Both genders reported being bullied because their behavior did not fit gender norms or because rumors had been spread that they were homosexual (Hoover & Oliver, 1996). In interviews with middle and high school students, three distinct groups of students were found to be at risk for bullying: (a) young women not viewed as physically attractive or stylish, (b) males who did not fit the macho social image, and (c) females who were physically mature earlier than their classmates (Shakeshaft et al., 1997).

Victims have been divided into two main categories–passive/submissive victims or provocative victims. Passive/submissive victims are characterized by an anxious or submissive reaction pattern combined, in the case of boys, with physical weakness (Olweus, 1994). They tend to be insecure, do not defend themselves, and are rejected by their peers (Bernstein & Watson, 1997). These attributes are known as internalizing difficulties (Boivin & Hymel, 1997; Egan & Perry, 1998; Hodges et al., 1997; Olweus, 1994; Olweus, 1995). The majority of these children believe that they are victimized because they are smaller, weaker, or for no reason at all (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). In the absence of bullies, passive/submissive victims are normal children, although they may be less popular with their peers than other children (Olweus, 1993).

Results of interviews with the parents of these passive/submissive victims suggest that these children were sensitive at a young age and have close, positive relationships with their parents, particularly their mothers. Teachers sometimes consider these children to be overprotected (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Parents of bullied children often report problems with their children such as bedwetting, nightmares, mood swings, temper tantrums, uncharacteristic disobedience and aggression, withdrawn behavior, and complaints of illness before school (Young, 1998).

The second category of victims is referred to as provocative victims. These victims display a hostile style of social interaction (Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988). These children are said to display externalizing difficulties such as disruptiveness, argumentativeness, and aggression (Boivin & Hymel, 1997; Perry et al., 1988). Their behaviors very likely serve to irritate and provoke other children, particularly the bullies (Bernstein & Watson, 1997; Hodges et al., 1997;

Olweus, 1994). These students are highly emotional and quick tempered, often resulting in their actions being reactive rather then proactive (Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1997). Some of these victims have been characterized as hyperactive (Olweus, 1993).

Researchers disagree as to the percentages of victims falling into passive/submissive and provocative categories. Perry et al. (1988) found the probability of a victim falling into either category approximately equal while Olweus (1993) reported that fewer than one in five victims fell into the provocative category (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). A few children who are victimized do not fit into either category. Talented or very popular children are also victimized. High achievers are sometimes viewed as "sucking up" to teachers and bullies attempt to torment them into changing their behavior (Beane, 1999).

Most students were significantly more likely to tell someone at home that they have been bullied than to tell their teacher, with younger students being more likely to tell anyone, either at home or at school (Whitney & Smith, 1993). Only about half of bullied students in primary and middle schools and about one third in secondary schools feel able to talk to a teacher about bullying problems. However, the percentage of students who tell tends to increase with the frequency of being bullied (Whitney & Smith, 1993). Adult responses to allegations of bullying in school have often discouraged students from further reports. In some cases, staff members and students have penalized victims for publicly reporting the incidents. In these cases, students are victimized twice, first by the harassment and then by the treatment of those assigned to protect them (Shakeshaft et al., 1997).

<u>Other Roles</u>

Recently, there has been a shift in bullying research from a dyadic focus on the bully/victim interaction to the recognition of bullying as a whole group process, with the majority of the children playing some kind of role (Sutton & Smith, 1999). Bullying often occurs in a situation in which several members of a group are present. Even those students not present are usually aware of what is happening due to the fact that bullying, by definition, happens repeatedly over a period of time (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kauklainen, 1996). Peers were found to be present in 85% of the bullying episodes on playgrounds and in classrooms. Bystanders filled a number of roles: co-bullies, supporters, audience and "seldom-interveners" (Cowie, 2000). It was judged that 87% of the students present at a bullying episode could be assigned the role of participant (Salmivalli et al.,1996). In studies involving English students, it was found that the most common types of participants are "assistants," who physically aid the bully; "reinforcers," who incite the bully; "outsiders," who remain inactive and pretend not to know what is happening; and "defenders," who provide assistance to the victim and confront the bully (Cowie, 2000). The approval and admiration of the assistants and reinforcers elevates and gives the bully status, thus perpetuating the continuation of the bullying behavior (Ballard, Argus, & Remly, 1999; Torrance, 1997).

Bullies often gather a small group of followers and then select a victim who is without protective relationships. The bully's followers become involved to protect themselves and to have the status of group membership. Some of the followers can be regarded as "passive bullies" who feel guilty for taking part in the bullying (Pearce & Thompson, 1998). Boys more frequently play the role of

bully, reinforcer, and assistant, while girls more frequently act as defender or outsider. Students were judged to be moderately well aware of their participant roles but underestimated their participation in the bullying process, stating that they acted as either defenders or outsiders. The majority of children orally report negative or at least neutral attitudes toward bullying (Boulton & Underwood, 1992), but what is more important is how these children actually respond in bullying situations (Sutton & Smith, 1999). The participant role an individual child takes in a bullying episode is determined by many factors such as the social status the child has established in the group and fear of being victimized for defending the victim. Ignoring what is happening between the bully and the victim may be interpreted by the bully as approval of the harassment (Salmivalli et al., 1996). A powerful predictor of children's behavior in a bullying situation is how their friends behave in such situations (Salmivalli et al., 1998).

Causes of Bullying

What causes a child to be a victim or a bully? Olweus (1977) found that bullies were not attacked or teased by their peers more frequently than boys in general. He also found that bullying was difficult to explain as a consequence of frustrations or failures in the school setting. Highly aggressive boys themselves, to a considerable degree, actively select and create the aggressive situations. Among boys, physical strength or weakness plays an important role. Victims, as a group, have less-then-average physical strength while bullies are often physically stronger then average boys in general and their victims in particular (Olweus, 1993). This is not to say that all boys who possess physical strength will be bullies or those boys with little physical strength will become victims of bullies. Overtly aggressive children tend to attribute malicious intent to peers,

even when such intent is not meant by those peers. Hostile intent attributions increase the likelihood that a child will behave aggressively with the aggression serving as a defense against a hostile peer (Crick, 1995).

Researchers have offered possible explanations for the increase in student aggression and violence: (a) an overall increase in societal aggression and violence, and (b) increased public school inclusion of seriously disturbed and socially maladjusted students, including those with histories of aggression and violence (Myles & Simpson, 1994). The manner in which young people interact with each other is strongly influenced by the model of relationships internalized as a result of their experiences in their own families (Rigby, 1993; Rigby 1994). Bullies have been found to come from homes where parents advocate the use of physical discipline, provide little supervision, possess inconsistent parenting styles, lack effective problem-solving skills, and teach their children to strike back at confrontation. Other characteristics often found to be present in the home were spousal abuse by the fathers, verbal abuse between the parents, punitive parenting styles, and exposure to television violence. With these conditions present, children often fail to develop effective social skills. This deficit, combined with an inability to be empathetic to others, may result in rejection by peers or the development of aggressive behavior toward other children (Horne & Socherman, 1996; Oliver, Oaks, & Hoover, 1994; Pearce & Thompson, 1998). In fact, the more severe the physical discipline in the home, the worse the development of the aggressive behavior has been shown to be (Garbarino, 1999; Weiss, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1992). Garbarino emphasized the role of early experiences in determining the

behavior of children. Especially important was the degree of maternal responsiveness in the first three months of the child's life.

A strong tendency to bully others appears to be associated with general unhappiness and dislike of school (Rigby & Slee, 1993). Other children display their dominance through bullying others or simply lack empathy for their victims (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Violence appears most commonly as a result of threatened egotism, when highly favorable self-concepts are disputed by a person or circumstance. People are reluctant to accept unflattering views of themselves and bullies seek to avoid negatively changing their self-concepts. Thus, avoidance of loss of esteem may lead to violence; dominating and bullying others may be considered one way of maintaining one's feeling of importance in the peer group (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1999). The higher, and especially the more inflated, the self-esteem, the greater the vulnerability to ego threats (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Dwyer (1999) listed additional causes for the epidemic of youth violence–the media's glorification of violence and the ravages of poverty. Whitney and Smith (1993) found social disadvantage to linked to a small extent with bullying behavior.

Why are some children the targets of bullies? There appears to be a strong association between nonassertive behavior and abuse by peers (Schwartz et al., 1993). In general, victims were not well liked by their peers. Victims were perceived as especially at risk when they lacked friends who could support and protect the child against aggressors (Hodges et al., 1997). Victimized children have been found to be socially ineffective in peer relationships. Chronic victims are more likely to suffer from depression, low self-

esteem, and anxiety in social situations (Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999; Oliver et al., 1994). Victims were more likely to come from families with overprotective parents (Berdondini & Smith, 1996; Rigby, Slee, & Cunningham, 1999). Rigby (1994) found that adolescent children of either sex were more vulnerable to bully/victim problems if they came from homes with less than adequate family functioning.

Another group at risk for being victims of bullies are those students who are peer rejected, that is, generally disliked to the point that they are not accepted by the group. Children who are rejected by the group are perceived as fair game for bullies because the knowledge that they are devalued by their peers seems to legitimize the children's status as a target of abuse (Hodges et al., 1997). Even those peers judged to be nonaggressive tended to express negative attitudes toward rejected classmates (Hymel,1986). There is evidence that once individuals are rejected by the group, the group tends to maintain that perception (Coie & Cillessen, 1993).

Peers may be more offended by children who fight less frequently but with unusual viciousness than by children who fight more often but in a manner that causes less harm. In addition, hyperactivity has been found to have an additive impact in terms of peer rejection, though it is not clear whether this is because the hyperactivity is an additional irritant to peers or because the hyperactivity affects qualitative features of aggressive behavior (Coie, Dodge, Terry, & Wright, 1991).

Researchers have begun to distinguish rejected children who are aggressive in their peer relations from those who tend to be nonaggressive, submissive, or withdrawn. These distinctions are important in understanding the

long-term outcomes associated with the difficulties. Aggressive-rejected children tend to be at greater risk for later externalizing difficulties such as juvenile delinquency (Parker & Asher, 1987, 1993), while withdrawn-rejected children are at greater risk for internalizing difficulties such as poor self-esteem and depression (Boivin, Poulin, & Vitaro, 1994; Hymel, Bowker, & Woody, 1993; Hymel, Rubin, Rowden, & LeMare, 1990; Sletta, Valas, Skaalvik, & Sobstad, 1996; Zakriski & Coie, 1996). Gender plays a role in determining the relation between aggression and peer rejection. This relation is more powerful among boys than girls, possibly because physical aggression is less frequent and less severe among girls (Coie et al., 1991.)

Interventions

A variety of interventions aimed at reducing the number of bullying incidents have been developed. These interventions range from individual to whole school approaches, bully courts, and the "no blame" approach (Elliott & Faupel, 1997). The most widely known intervention program for bullying was developed in Norway by Olweus with the main goal of reducing the incidence of bullying in the school (Barone, 1997). To do this, Olweus attempted to: (a) increase awareness, (b) persuade teachers and parents to actively oppose bullying, and (c) protect and support victims (Ballard et al., 1999). To deal effectively with the problem of bullying, it must first be seen as a problem by all stakeholders: faculty and staff, parents, community, and students (Limper, 2000). Researchers have suggested being proactive, attempting to prevent bullying rather than simply responding to it (Limper, 2000; Litke, 1996; Myles & Simpson, 1994; Roberts & Coursol, 1996). While Hill and Drolet (1999) advocated the use of age- and developmentally-appropriate, culturally sensitive

violence prevention programs in health education programs in the nation's schools, Remley (1989) suggested the use of school counselors in intervention roles.

In 1987 the National School Safety Center sponsored a forum to develop a prevention program for the United States. A wide range of strategies were identified to help in the control and prevention of bullying. The development of a comprehensive, integrated plan that could be implemented in schools across the nation was recommended (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Roland, 2000). Among the suggestions to be included in the comprehensive plan were:

1. Promote facts about bullying. Bullying is a significant problem in the nation's schools. Adults and children alike must realize the ramifications of this type of behavior, for both the victim and the bully.

2. Dispel beliefs about aggressive behavior. The attitude that bullying, fighting, and other aggressive behaviors are a normal part of growing up must be changed (Barone, 1997; Vail, 1999). Schools must promote the belief that aggressive behavior is completely unacceptable. Bullying and other forms of aggression must be dealt with quickly and effectively, and schools should work to teach alternatives to these behaviors.

3. Conduct a school-wide assessment of bullying. Schools must work to assess the extent of the problem, the attitudes and beliefs of the bullies and the victims, and student opinions of how well the school is currently handling the problem and what should be done.

4. Develop a code of student conduct (Olweus, 1993). While most schools have existing codes of conduct, these codes should be revised, with

student input, to include provisions to deal with bullying and both appropriate and inappropriate student/student and student/faculty interactions.

5. Provide counseling services for both victims and bullies. Roberts and Coursol (1996) stressed the need for both immediate response and long-term commitment to the victims of bullies. Counseling services for bullies are most effective when there is an emphasis on the development of skills to replace aggressive behaviors with more appropriate ones. Victims have been shown to benefit from assertiveness and social skills training.

6. Involve parents and the community in the intervention process. Parents often have the same problems at home that teachers have at school. Therefore, involving parents, teaching parenting and child management skills, and linking home and school intervention programs are components of a comprehensive plan (Hazler, 1994).

7. Implement intervention strategies specific to the problem of aggression. Intervention strategies should be implemented building wide with the complete staff trained in the implementation of preventative and intervention strategies. Of particular importance to those students who are rejected by their peers would be interventions that promote increases in the prosocial quality of their interactions with peers (Parkhurst & Asher, 1992).

8. Incorporate accountability and evaluation procedures as a part of the plan. A system should be put in place to document the incidences of bullying behavior, with the data reported to all stakeholders. This data should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program so that changes can be made as needed.

In addition to these suggestions, Horne and Socherman (1996) suggest the concept of instituting an honor code, reversing the traditional code of silence, and replacing it with the idea that reporting bullying is not only an appropriate but an expected thing to do. Mobilizing peer group pressure has been found to be effective in discouraging bullying behavior (Rigby & Slee, 1991; Smith, 1997).

Garrity et al. (1997) advocates a systems approach which creates a positive culture with caring behaviors that demonstrate compassion and empathy. Building connectedness with the school and community is a major goal of this program. In these days of outside interventions such as police officers and metal detectors, the most effective tool for keeping weapons out of the school is other students reporting the weapons. This is a simple act through which the caring majority develops a culture and instills the values of their community in their school. This program focuses on placing power in the hands of the caring majority and encouraging them to assertively and positively use prosocial interventions.

Litke (1996) suggests forming an advisory program for teaching values, fostering acceptance, and building relationships. The use of cooperative group work was suggested by Hazler (1994) to build social skills such as listening, sharing ideas, and supporting others. Classroom intervention is a crucial part of this bully-proofing program because it empowers the silent majority to stand up to the bullies and to help the victims. This classroom intervention is a core component of the program because bullying takes place more frequently and severely outside the arenas of adult attention. Staff training is a critical aspect of the program. Students learn the social/emotional concepts of bully-proofing

best through discussion rather than lecture and through practicing in role-playing situations.

An additional suggestion for increased supervision was the use of video monitoring. Originally placed in schools as a deterrent to theft, video cameras were also successfully used to detect and document bullying episodes (Olweus, 1993; Ross, 1996). Spurzem (1999) posited that educators should question how children can be prevented from being placed in a situation in which they see violence as their only choice. She stated that schools are not equipped or able to provide the long-term interventions needed by some children, particularly when it is necessary to involve the whole family. Families are often unwilling or unable to access appropriate help due to the inability to pay, the reluctance to acknowledge that a problem exists, or the refusal to consult with the appropriate mental health services. Spurzem suggested providing adequate and appropriate parent education and mental health services to families of children in preschool and elementary school to insure that these children come to school as successful and well-adjusted individuals.

According to Pearce and Thompson (1998), most of the preventive actions against bullying should begin at home, before a child ever enters school. By the time children enter school, they should have been taught to have a reasonable level of aggression control. Adults who care for these children should: (a) set an example of positive relationships, (b) have strong aggression control themselves, (c) teach children that aggression is unacceptable, (d) stop unacceptable aggression immediately, and (e) foster empathy through discussion of victims' feelings.

These lessons should be continued in preschool through an emphasis on cultivating positive peer relationships (Brown, Odom, & Holcombe, 1996). If a young child is engaging in bullying in an attempt to improve self-esteem or to become popular, early intervention focusing on building skills necessary to appropriately develop friendships may serve a dual purpose: curbing bullying and also reducing the loneliness experienced by the bully upon becoming a young adult (Tritt & Duncan, 1997). Hoover and Milner (1998) suggested creating inclusive opportunities and structures to allow young people to experience belongingness and affirmation. The later positive interventions are introduced in bullying problems, the more likely formal treatment will be necessary (Twemlow, Sacco, & Williams, 1996).

Increasing the capacity and motivation of children to cooperate may lead to a reduction in bullying (Hazler, 1994; Rigby et al., 1997). Hoover and Anderson (1999) proffered teaching altruism, the inclination to help others with some cost to the helper, as an antidote to bullying. Intercession with an expense distinguishes altruism from other classes of prosocial behavior. Going beyond noninvolvement, altruism requires students acknowledge that their discomfort when observing another person in distress is based on empathy with the victim. The relief of this pain will best be achieved through coming to the aid of the victim. Hoover and Anderson posited that this approach might also serve to strengthen treatment programs for bullying by supporting interventions on behalf of the victim and providing examples of modeling of desired behaviors.

An intervention often overlooked in the literature was the concept of helping children to make friends. According to Grotpeter and Crick (1996), the negative effects of problems experienced within the peer group context could

be buffered if the victim is successfully a part in a reciprocal, dyadic friendship. Children's friendships serve many significant development functions such as providing contexts for learning social skills, acting as information sources for self-knowledge and self-esteem, and providing emotional and cognitive resources for support and coping. Having one or more friends helps protect children against victimization. Aggressive children prefer to target children who lack friends because they can do so without fear of harm or retaliation (Hodges et al., 1997; Hodges et al., 1999; Pellegrini et al., 1999). An important consideration in working with school-aged children is to insure that they have the necessary social skills and problem solving training to combat bullying (Biggam & Power, 1999; Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998).

<u>Role of the Teacher</u>

An important factor in determining the extent of bullying in a school or classroom has been the attitude of the teacher (Olweus, 1993; Olweus, 1994). In general, researchers have found that teachers do relatively little to stop bullying behavior (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Olweus, 1994). Evidence suggests that teachers tend to underestimate the level of bullying among schoolchildren (O'Moore, 2000). In a study of children in kindergarten through third grade, teachers and/or other adults, although present at all times, were either uninvolved or ignored 71% of the observed incidents (Froschl & Sprung, 1999). A clear negative association exists between relative "teacher density" during recess or break time and the amount of bully/victim problems: The greater the number of teachers supervising during break periods, the lower the level of bullying problems (Brody, Stoneman, & Wheatley, 1984; Slee & Rigby, 1994).

There is evidence to suggest that students are reluctant to tell school authorities that they are being bullied (O'Moore, 2000; Shakeshaft et al., 1997). According to Shakeshaft et al. (1997), typical adult responses to allegations of harassment at school tend to discourage students from further reports. These responses seldom curbed harassment and left students feeling that they had no place to turn for help. In some cases, the staff penalized the victim for reporting the offense. This gave the victims the sense of having been violated twice—first by the harassment and then by the treatment of the adults and other students.

A greater understanding of student victimization could lead to increased vigilance by teachers during both structured and less structured activities. Teachers could also provide opportunities for positive student involvement in cooperative peer activities (Roberts & Coursol, 1996). To effect any real change in prevention or alleviation of bullying, however, there should be an emphasis on teacher training, particularly in the area of self-esteem and conflict resolution (O'Moore, 2000).

Justification for Study

Given the extent of the problem of bullying and the consequences of this behavior to those involved, a concerted effort is needed to reduce, if not eliminate, this inappropriate behavior in schools. O'Moore (2000) expressed the belief that teachers are the key to change. The school's attitude toward bullying is critical in that it sets the standard for the level of aggression generally held to be acceptable in society (Pearce & Thompson, 1998). Teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and routines play a key role in determining the extent that the problem of bullying is manifested in schools (Olweus, 1995). Even if the percentage of students that engage in bullying behavior remains constant as

suggested in some studies, the population of schools is rising, resulting in an increasing number of aggressive children. If not addressed, aggressive behavior tends to escalate in the early years, resulting in greater physical and personal damage over time. Research has shown that bullying impacts the ability of victims to learn and grow in the school environment (Horne & Socherman, 1996). Parents of victims are beginning to turn to the legal system with charges of negligence when schools fail to provide a safe environment for their children (Greenbaum, 1987; Horne & Socherman, 1996). In the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Resnick et al., 1997), researchers found that higher levels of connectedness to school correlated to lower levels of violence. Vest (1999) attributed this connectedness to students having positive relationships with teachers and considered these relationships to be the most important educational factor in protecting teenagers from harmful behavior.

The majority of the research on bullying has been conducted with the focus on documentation of the incidence rate of bullying in schools or the success of intervention programs. Additional research has focused on roles in bullying incidences or long term negative effects on both bullies and victims. While the research has shown the importance of the teacher in establishing the level of acceptability of bullying in the classroom or on the schoolgrounds (Olweus, 1995), comparatively little research has been done on the effect of intervention strategies of individual teachers in combating this phenomenon on a daily basis.

Summary

Bullying has a long history with written accounts dating to the nineteenth century (Ross, 1996). However, only in the early 1970s were efforts made to

study the phenomenon systematically. For many years these efforts were confined largely to the Scandinavian countries. Not until the late 1980s and early 1990s was bullying studied in countries such as Japan, England, The Netherlands, Canada, the United States, and Australia (Olweus, 1993). Recent school violence in the United States has forced the nation to carefully examine bullying, its causes, and its effects.

Bullying is generally defined as "repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons" (Rigby, 1996, p. 15). Past research has focused primarily on the study of overt aggression, those behaviors that harm others through physical damage or the threat of such damage. More recent research has expanded to include the study of relational aggression, those behaviors which seek to harm others through manipulation or control of relationships with others (Crick, 1997). When attempting to inflict harm on their peers, children do so in ways that are most likely to thwart or damage the goals that are valued by their respective gender peer groups. Boys tend to harm others through physical and verbal aggression while girls tend to focus on relational issues during social interaction (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Bullying is likely the most prevalent form of violence in schools and the form that is likely to affect the greatest number of students (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Although the estimates of bullying vary, it is estimated that between 80% to 90% of adolescents and preadolescents will at some point in their lives face ongoing psychological or physical harassment (Oliver, Young, & LaSalle, 1994). The determination of actual incidence rate is determined by how the phenomenon is defined and the instrument used to measure it (Boulton &

Underwood, 1992). However, research indicates a high prevalence of bullying in schools throughout the world (Tritt & Duncan, 1997).

Negative consequences of bullying exist for both the perpetrators and their victims. The experience of victimization has been linked to anxiety, depression, loneliness (Boivin et al., 1995; Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Egan & Perry, 1998; Hoover & Anderson, 1999), loss of self-esteem (Rigby, 1996; Rigby & Slee, 1999), school avoidance (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Bowers et al., 1992; Eslea & Smith, 1998; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Rigby, 1996; Slee & Rigby, 1994; Smith, 1992; Vail, 1999), poor academic performance (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Vail, 1999), peer rejection and a limited number of friends (Hodges et al., 1997; Rigby, 1996). Chronic victims have turned to such drastic measures as suicide (Rigby & Slee, 1999) and the use of weapons for revenge against their tormentors (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Garrity et al., 1997; Hazler, 1994; Oliver et al., 1994). Young people who bullied others were found to be at increased risk for problems such as criminality and alcohol abuse (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; Olweus, 1993). As adults, these people were more likely to experience marital problems and to commit child or spousal abuse (Hoover & Anderson, 1999).

Given the negative consequences of bullying, something must be done to combat its existence. A variety of interventions have been suggested and implemented, some with more success than others. Bullying must first be seen as a problem by all stakeholders: faculty and staff, parents, community, and students (Limper, 2000). Researchers have suggested being proactive, attempting to prevent bullying rather than simply responding to it (Limper, 2000, Litke, 1996; Myles & Simpson, 1994; Roberts & Coursol, 1996). An important

factor in determining the extent of bullying in a school or classroom has been the attitude of the teacher (Olweus, 1993). In general, researchers have found that teachers do relatively little to stop bullying (Olweus, 1994). O'Moore (2000) posited that teachers are the key to change. Teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and routines play a major role in determining the extent that the problem of bullying is manifested in schools (Olweus, 1995).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of selected teachers in reference to the topic of bullying. Six regional and state teacher of the year winners were selected for the study as they had already been identified by their colleagues and committees of their peers as exemplary members of the teaching profession. In addition, six teachers not recognized as teachers of the year from the same schools and comparable grade levels were selected for participation in the study. The researcher attempted to determine the teachers' opinions of the extent of the problem and their successful intervention strategies implemented in an effort to reduce or eliminate the problem. This chapter discusses the methodological aspects of the study including descriptions of the sample, the research design, data collection, and data analysis.

Two research questions guided the study:

1. To what degree do teachers view bullying as a problem in their schools and classrooms?

2. What interventions have teachers introduced or implemented that have made a difference in dealing with the problem of bullying?

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Description of the Sample

The data in this study were obtained from interviews with regional and state teacher of the year winners from the state of Louisiana. Six elementary teacher of the year winners, five at the regional and one at the state level, and six teachers not recognized as teachers of the year from the same schools and comparable grade levels were interviewed. The researcher used a series of questions selected to determine the teachers' perceptions of the extent of the problem of bullying and interventions they have undertaken to reduce or eliminate the problem in their school and classroom. The teachers were selected from a list of past winners obtained from the Louisiana State Department of Education.

Of the teachers interviewed, four held bachelor's degrees, four master's degrees, two master's plus 30 degrees, and two held educational specialist's degrees. One participant was a second year teacher while the state teacher of the year had recently retired with 25 years experience. In years of experience, the teachers ranged from one to 28 with a mean of 15. Two were kindergarten teachers, one taught first grade, one taught second, two taught third, two taught fifth, one taught seventh, and two taught eighth. Of the twelve, two worked only with students having been identified as gifted and talented.

Three of the schools used in the research were considered to be urban, two were considered to be rural, and one was considered to be suburban. The grade configurations represented were kindergarten through third, kindergarten through fifth, kindergarten through sixth, pre-kindergarten through sixth, seventh and eighth, and kindergarten through twelfth. The schools ranged in student

population from 525 to 986. All schools served varied populations from mostly middle income families.

Table 1

Educational Levels and Years of Experience for Selected Teachers

Teacher #	Years Experience	Degree
1	13	MA
2	9	BA
3	25	EdS
4	1	BA
5	26	BA
6	18	EdS
7	12	MA
8	3	BS
9	20	+30
10	15	+30
11	10	MA
12	28	MS

Table 2
School Information for Selected Teachers

Interview #s	Grade Configuration	Category	Number of Students
1,2	7/8	urban	950
3,4	K-3	urban	550
5,6	K-5	rural	525
7,8	K-12	rural	680
9,10	Pre-K-6	urban	650
11,12	K-6	suburban	986

<u>Setting</u>

The majority of the teachers who were currently teaching were interviewed at their school site. The state teacher of the year included in the

research had recently retired and was interviewed at a restaurant. One regional winner of teacher of the year award was interviewed at the researcher's school and two teachers from the same school were interviewed at the media center of their school board office. All interviews were conducted at times and places suggested by the interviewee. Five of the six schools represented in the study were visited during the course of the research.

Five of the six physical facilities were approximately 30 years old or older. The remaining facility was less than 20 years old. All schools were well maintained according to teacher interviews. Teachers interviewed reported that their schools served mostly middle class populations. Three of the schools served predominantly white populations while the remaining three served racially balanced student populations.

Research Design

The phenomenological inquiry approach was used, focusing on how people describe things and experience through their senses. Personal understanding comes from sensory experience of a given phenomenon; however, that experience must be described, explicated, and interpreted. Interpretation is critical to achieving understanding of an experience (Patton, 1990). Selected teachers were asked to supply demographic data (See Table 1 and Table 2) including educational background, number of years of experience, grade level currently teaching, number of years taught in current grade level, and description of the school's physical environment. Following collection of demographic data, teachers were asked to respond to a set of 16 questions regarding the issue of bullying in schools. Responses were collected

by the researcher in written and audiotape recorded format. Interview questions included:

1. How do you define bullying?

2. To what degree is bullying a problem in your classroom and at your school?

3. What do you do in your classroom to create a positive educational environment?

4. Identify episodes of bullying that you have observed in your classroom and on your school campus. Explain how you handled the situation.

5. What do you do to help social isolates in your classroom become accepted by their peers?

6. What do you do in your classroom to assure that all of the students work together?

7. What proactive measures have you undertaken to prevent bullying? What reactive measures have you taken?

8. What are the top three conflict resolution strategies you teach your students?

9. What is the policy of your school administration in dealing with bullying?

10. Does your school handbook directly address bullying? If not, would you support the addition of such policy? What would you like to see included?

11. Have many professional development activities been offered on this topic during the past two to five years? If so, have you attended? How effective was the presentation and how much of it was beneficial to you personally?

12. What is your role in reducing bullying in your classroom and in your school?

13. How do your intervention/prevention procedures differ from your fellow teachers and administrators?

14. To what degree do you view bullying as the cause for school violence and why?

15. Outline your ideal plan for addressing this issue in classrooms.

16. Is there anything I have not asked about bullying that you would like to share?

A list of ten questions, based on the review of literature, was first proposed by the researcher. Following discussion with professional colleagues, the researcher expanded the list to 13 questions and conducted mock interviews with three teachers. Based on the results of these interviews, the researcher extended the list of questions to 15 and again conducted mock interviews with two teachers. The list of 15 questions was submitted to the researcher's doctoral committee who made suggestions regarding the instrument. These suggestions were incorporated into the interview questions, increasing the number of questions to 16.

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, the researcher secured institutional permission for the use of human subjects for this study. A letter was written introducing the researcher, explaining the purpose of the study, and requesting participation on the part of the teacher of the year. These letters were sent to approximately 24 regional teachers of the year and two state teachers of the year, requesting their participation in the study. These teachers were selected because they resided in the northern part of the state of Louisiana and were accessible to the researcher. Only two state winners of the teacher of the year honor were contacted as they were the only two that met the established grade level

criteria. All other state winners taught at the high school level. The researcher was able to contact only the regional winners from the years 1998-2000 as the State Department of Education was unable to produce a list of regional winners for the years prior to 1998. Only two responses to the original letter of request were received, one regional teacher of the year and the state winner who participated responded, agreeing to participate in the study. A second letter was sent to the initial group, again asking for assistance in completing the project. Two favorable responses were received following this request. The other two teachers agreed to take part in the study after the researcher made visits to their respective schools. All teachers who responded to the initial or secondary request or were personally contacted agreed to participate in the study. All those who agreed to participate were interviewed with the exception of one teacher who responded to the secondary request, sent months earlier, after the data collection had been completed.

Following agreement on the part of each subject, the researcher scheduled appointments. The researcher traveled to each teacher's respective school at a time designated by the interviewee, conducted face-to-face interviews with each of the subjects, recorded responses in writing and, with permission, on audiocassette. The subjects were each asked the same questions and their responses were recorded verbatim through the use of note-taking strategies supplemented by the recorded accounts of the inquiries. The subjects were allowed to follow the session with any questions of concerns of their own. These comments were recorded and considered as supplemental data to the study.

Data Analysis

The primary focus of the study was the impact of the teacher in dealing with the problem of bullying at school. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with teachers who had been identified as exemplary through the teacher of the year program sponsored by the State Department of Education and local school districts. Interviews were also conducted with teachers not recognized as teachers of the year from the same schools and comparable grade levels as the six teachers of the year. These interviews were recorded through the use of note-taking and audiocassettes. The data gathered were transcribed into written verbatim accounts of the inquiry sessions.

The grounded theory approach to the qualitative analysis of data was used. In this approach, the researcher was interested in deriving universal statements of general social processes. The question was not whether the findings are generalizable, but to which other settings they are generalizable (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Generalizations drawn from the data can be used to enable teachers to determine the effectiveness of their current intervention strategies and implement strategies which might be more successful.

Data were coded using the coding paradigm suggested by Strauss (1987). This paradigm assisted the researcher in coding data for relevance to a given category. The initial type of coding was open or unrestricted coding of the data. Open coding was accomplished by scrutinizing the interviews in great detail, producing concepts and relationships that seem to fit the data. To insure the proper use and success of open coding, Strauss suggested the researcher ask of the data a set of questions: (a) "What study are these data pertinent to?" (Strauss, 1987, p. 30), (b) "What category does this indicate?" (Strauss, 1987, p.

30), and (c) "What is actually happening in the data?" (Strauss, 1987, P. 31). According to Strauss' recommendation, the data were analyzed minutely to achieve grounded theoretical coverage. Core categories were determined, including the teachers' general level of understanding of the phenomenon of bullying, the teachers' handling of everyday routines, and teachers' responses to bullying episodes. These categories aided the researcher in determining conclusions from the study.

Summary

Research data were collected through the use of interviews conducted with one state and five regional teacher of the year winners and a colleague from each winner's school. This colleague was one who had not been recognized as a teacher of the year. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Data were then analyzed using the open coding paradigm in which the interviews were scrutinized for relationships. Core categories were determined to aid the researcher in drawing conclusions from the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This study was designed to investigate the perceptions of selected successful teachers in reference to the topic of bullying. Interviews were conducted with one state and five regional teacher of the year winners and one teacher from each winner's respective school. This colleague was one who had not been recognized as a teacher of the year. The interviews were recorded in writing and on audiocassette, then transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted from January to May, 2001. The average length of an interview was 35 minutes.

Analysis

Each teacher was asked to supply the following demographic data: educational background, number of years experience, grade level currently teaching, description of the school's physical environment, and description of the student population. The teacher was then asked to respond to the 16 questions from the teacher questionnaire. The responses were compiled and analyzed in order to produce concepts and relationships. For this study, responses of those teachers having been recognized as teacher of the year, all odd-numbered responses, were coded as RTOY (Regional Teacher of the Year) or STOY (State Teacher of the Year). Responses of those teachers not recognized as teachers of the year, all even-numbered responses, were coded as NTOY (Not Teacher of the Year). The interview questions have been placed

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in tables followed by either an exerpt from or a synopsis of each teacher's response.

Table 3

Interview Question One-How do you define bullying?

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	"someone makes another person feel intimidated or feel they have something to fear"
2 NTOY	"dominate or make someone else feel less superior"
3 STOY	"when one person tries to assert their authority in a very aggressive way"
4 NTOY	"a child that would be aggressive"
5 RTOY	"anyone who pushes another child around, either verbally or physically"
6 NTOY	"make another person feel bad about themselves, either verbally or physically"
7 RTOY	"bullying is intimidation, it's harassment. I think it includes teasing, making fun of others, taunting"
8 NTOY	"someone who picks on someone a lot, says mean things to them, is always cutting them down some way, hitting on them, threatening"
9 RTOY	"any form of intimidation of one child against another"
10 NTOY	"making someone do something maybe that they don't want to do. Intimidating them."

Table 3 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
11 RTOY	"try to make someone feel bad about themselves or to intimidate someone else"
12 NTOY	"someone that takes advantage of someone"

Seven of the twelve teachers, 1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12, used the word *intimidation* in the definition they provided. Of these seven teachers, numbers 1, 3, 7, 9, and 11 were identified as teachers of the year. Five of the teachers, numbers 5 through 9 also discussed both the verbal and physical aspects of bullying in their response. RTOY 1 mentioned the significance of fear in the bullying process.

Three of the teachers, (RTOY 11 and NTOY 12), both from the same school, and RTOY 1 addressed in their response the issue of what might make someone a victim. RTOY 1 and RTOY 11 identified possible issues such as physical appearance or lack of participation in sports. NTOY 12 mentioned lack of physical size, strength, or intelligence, or the fact that the victim could be easily intimidated. This was significant in that these two teachers had dealt with a serious incident during this school in which a male student was labeled with a derogatory term. The student's parents had sent certified letters to the teacher, the principal, and the local school board regarding the problem. Having dealt with this situation gave these three teachers a broader perspective, one that focused on the victim as well as the bully. RTOY 5 had done some reading on

the subject and stated that while bullies could be of either sex, they were most often male.

Table 4

Interview Question Two-To what degree is bullying a problem in your classroom and at your school?

Teacher #	Admits Bullying Exists in School	Problem in Class
1 RTOY	yes	yes
2 NTOY	yes	yes
3 STOY	yes	no
4 NTOY	yes	no
5 RTOY	yes	no
6 NTOY	yes	no
7 RTOY	yes	no
8 NTOY	yes	yes
9 RTOY	yes	yes
10 NTOY	yes	no
11 RTOY	yes	no
12 NTOY	yes	yes

When asked this question, all twelve admitted that bullying exists in schools but eight of the twelve posited that it was not a problem in their

classrooms. The only teachers who admitted that bullying was a problem in their particular classroom were: RTOY 1, who teaches eighth grade in a large junior high school setting, NTOY 8 who teaches eighth grade in a K-12 school, RTOY 9 who teaches first grade in a Pre-K-6, and NTOY 12, who teaches fifth grade in a K-6 school and was the teacher who had the severe problem in her classroom this year. RTOY 1 described the presence of more verbal than physical abuse in her classroom and at her school. She suggested that her students, all in the gifted and talented program, were often the victims rather than the bullies. She saw their academic abilities and, particularly in the males, a lack of size and strength as causes for their being targeted.

RTOY 7 stated that bullying was not a problem in her classroom but, in later questions, proceeded to describe incidents that had taken place. Her coworker, NTOY 8 discussed problems with a specific student in one of her classes, stating that in other sections it was not a problem. RTOY 9 also mentioned difficulties with a particular student, a first grader who had been suspended during the school year for bullying. NTOY 12 began her answer to the question by saying, "I'm sure it's in every classroom. This particular year, I have been more aware of it because of one student who has really been picked on by several bullies."

While RTOY 1 discussed the extent of the problem within her classroom and school, RTOY 11, also a teacher of the academically gifted, stated that she does not have a problem with bullying because of the "caliber of the students" that she teaches. RTOY 11 offered the explanation that her students come to class excited about learning. The difference in the responses could be explained, in part, by the ages of the students in the classes. RTOY 1 works

strictly with eighth grade students in a junior high setting, while RTOY 11 works only with fifth grade students in a K-6 school.

Three of the teachers addressed the issue of the location where bullying does take place, mentioning that it occurs during times that are less strictly supervised. RTOY 7, who teaches eighth grade in a K-12 school, posited that it takes place at recess break and lunch break. RTOY 9 told of incidents in the bathroom and on the bus. NTOY 10, a kindergarten teacher, suggested that the playground was the site of most bullying and that the behavior increased in the upper grades of her Pre-K-6 school.

On this question, one teacher, NTOY 6, a third grade teacher in a K-5 school, focused on a different aspect of bullying, that of teacher-to-student rather than student-to-student. While not the subject of this research, this is an interesting topic worthy of further study.

Table 5

Interview Question Three-What do you do in your classroom to create a positive educational environment?

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	Character Counts
2 NTOY	structure, verbal praising, rewards
3 STOY	Create a classroom family.
4 NTOY	behavior plan
5 RTOY	positive feedback, praise, motivation

Table 5 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
6 NTOY	unconditional love
7 RTOY	active engagement, follow rules
8 NTOY	quickly address problem
9 RTOY	behavior plan, Character Counts
10 NTOY	praise, build self-esteem, Character Counts
11 RTOY	value individual differences
12 NTOY	Character Counts, encourage helping each other

Four of the 12 teachers interviewed, RTOY 1, STOY 3, RTOY 5, and RTOY 7, all teachers of the year, immediately mentioned that creating a positive educational climate begins the first time the students enter the classroom. They used the specific phrases, "when I see my class for the first time," "where at the very beginning," "at the first of the year," and "from the moment my kids step into the classroom." While these four teachers made reference to this time frame when first asked this question, in later responses, seven of the other teachers echoed their sentiments that creating a positive educational climate begins when the students enter the classroom for the first time.

In response to this specific question, four teachers listed the Character Counts program to help create a positive educational climate. RTOY 1 mentioned the program in two other answers. RTOY 11 did not include the Character Counts program in the answer to this question but did mention it in a

later response. These five teachers were all employed in the same school system, one which advocated the use of the Character Counts program. Of the six teachers within this system, five included the program in their responses and spoke favorably of it.

Two teachers of younger children, kindergarten and first grade, made specific reference to a behavior management plan in use in their classrooms. The first grade teacher used the "green, yellow, red" plan in which green represented good behavior, yellow stood for a warning, and red indicated a violation requiring set negative consequences. The kindergarten teacher used a similar plan utilizing faces ranging from happy to sad.

Four teachers, RTOY 5 and NTOY 2, 4, and 10, mentioned the importance of praise in creating a positive educational climate. Verbal praise and physical cues such as thumbs up and pats on the back were listed. RTOY 5 and 9 also discussed their use of praise in the classroom in helping social isolates become accepted by their peers. STOY 3 and RTOY 11 mentioned striving to foster acceptance among the students within their classroom. STOY 3 and NTOY 6 stressed creating a "family" within the classroom, building a sense of belonging for students. RTOY 7 in response to this question and NTOY 10 in response to a later question both discussed the need to keep the students busy to prevent opportunities for problems to arise.

Table 6

Interview Question Four-Identify episodes of bullying that you have observed in your classroom and on your school campus. Explain how you handled the situation.

Teacher #	Cited Specific Instances	Cited Specific Children
1 RTOY	yes	yes
2 NTOY	no	no
3 STOY	yes	no
4 NTOY	yes	yes
5 RTOY	yes	yes
6 NTOY	yes	yes
7 RTOY	yes	yes
8 NTOY	yes	yes
9 RTOY	yes	yes
10 NTOY	no	no
11 RTOY	no*	no
12 NTOY	no*	no

Note. * 11 and 12 both cited specific instances in later questions.

In responding to this query, nine of the teachers furnished specific incidents with which they had dealt. RTOY 1 identified both a case of physical aggression and a case of sexual harassment and told how she had helped each student seek resolution to the problem. STOY 3 told of two Down

syndrome students in her second grade class and how she aided the other children in understanding and accepting these children's handicaps. NTOY 6 told of two students who responded to perceived threats with physical or verbal abuse. RTOY 7 and NTOY 8, both eighth grade teachers at a K-12 school, identified the same student as being a bully. RTOY 9 identified a first grade student who had been suspended during the school year for bullying behavior. RTOY 11 and NTOY 12, who teach fifth grade at the same school, both identified either in this response or another, the child who had been victimized by being repeatedly labeled. NTOY 4, a kindergarten teacher with one year of experience, discussed a male student from the previous year. This student was physically aggressive in the classroom, pushing, knocking things over, and physically intimidating the other children. She discussed strategies she had tried such as taking away recess, allowing him time to calm down when he became upset, and contacting his parents. The later two were more successful in that she felt that the child needed the recess time to rid himself of excess energy.

Table 7

Interview Question Five-What do you do to help social isolates become accepted by their peers?

Teacher #	Group Activities	Pair With Specific Child
1 RTOY	yes	yes
2 NTOY	yes	no

Table 7 continued

Teacher #	Group Activities	Pair With Specific Child
3 STOY	no*	yes
4 NTOY	yes	yes
5 RTOY	yes	yes
6 NTOY	no*	yes
7 RTOY	yes	no
8 NTOY	yes	yes
9 RTOY	yes	yes
10 NTOY	yes	yes
11 RTOY	no*	no
12 NTOY	no*	no

Note. * 3, 6, 11, and 12 all mentioned group work in a response to a later question.

Nine of the twelve teachers interviewed specifically named group or partner work as an avenue for helping those students considered social isolates. Seven of the teachers suggested matching the child with an individual or group of students selected to meet the student's needs. Certain children who were especially outgoing or compassionate were recruited to aid in making the child feel accepted. Teachers reported pairing weaker students with stronger ones and less verbal with more verbal ones. RTOY 11 worked to help students value differences among individuals. She had also discussed this in the earlier question about creating a positive educational environment. One way in which she accomplished this was to talk about the world's scientists and inventors and

how the world, in their day, considered them to be odd or strange. She tells the students that, when society looks back on these scientists' and inventors' achievements and accomplishments, it recognizes their brilliance. RTOY 7 reported sending children who were being picked on to the counselor for help while RTOY 1 advocated the use of student journals as a means of insight into possible problem situations.

Table 8

Interview Question Six-What do you do in your classroom to ensure that all of the students work together?

Teacher #	Cooperative Grouping
1 RTOY	yes
2 NTOY	yes
3 STOY	yes
4 NTOY	yes
5 RTOY	yes
6 NTOY	yes
7 RTOY	yes
8 NTOY	yes
9 RTOY	yes
10 NTOY	yes

Table 8 continued

Teacher #	Cooperative Grouping
11 RTOY	yes
12 NTOY	yes

The answers to the question about social isolates paralleled the teachers' responses to the following question regarding how they ensured that students worked together. All twelve teachers stressed the importance of group work in the process. Three of the teachers of the year, STOY 3, RTOY 9, and RTOY 11, and NTOY 10 told how students were assigned roles to ensure that all students shared responsibility for the success of the group. STOY 3 told how she made sure that all students had the chance to be successful at their assigned tasks. Three teachers, RTOY 7, RTOY 11, and NTOY 12, discussed changing the groups frequently to allow the students the opportunity to interact with different children. NTOY 8 and RTOY 11 told how, once the group work has begun, the students cannot change groups but must learn to work through their conflicts.

Table 9

Interview Question Seven-What proactive measures have you undertaken to prevent bullying? What reactive measures have you taken?

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	Proactive-"Stating my rules, you know, at the beginning of the year about politeness. If you expect respect, be the first to show it." Reactive-"The situation like I took the child to the office to talk with the assistant principal or the guidance counselor. I have pulled two warring factions out in the hall and had them talk."
2 NTOY	Proactive-"You can't prevent it as far as the first time, but after the first time it can be prevented by warning the students and conferencing with the student that does the bullying." Reactive-"After it's been done you have to reassure the student that's been bullied that it will be taken care of and that they will be safe in your classroom and if there is a problem, they have to report it."
3 STOY	Proactive-"I did this with bullying, with fights, with verbal fights or physical fights. And they're much less serious in grades one through three, but I think if we start right there, that's where we need to start with our violence and our bullying."

Table 9 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
	Reactive-"The children knew that if they got into a fight, they had to write a letter of apology to the other person whether they started the fight or whether they just participated. I tried my best to find out the root of the fight and to not make a person who was really just taking up for themselves feel totally like they could not do that."
4 NTOY	Proactive-"We have our six rules, and I just go back to those."
	Reactive-"Just try to talk through it, figure out what a better way would be to handle that."
5 RTOY	Proactive-"Just by nature of my classroom environment, it just doesn't lend itself. I have a very controlled classroom in that it's very structured. We go over rules at the beginning of the year."
	Reactive-"We talk about why he did it and how he thinks he should have handled it in a better way."
6 NTOY	Proactive-"The first day of school when the kids come in, when I shut that door I tell my kids, 'Welcome home.' Because you are home."
	Reactive-"I usually try to take the children aside, and I always tell the kids, before you get to the point where you

Table 8 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
	just want to punch somebody's lights out, come and tell me."
7 RTOY	Proactive-"We get a little magazine, it's called *Smart Decisions* and it's a magazine that has a lot of different little features but usually has something to do with peer pressure or self-esteem so I pull those." Reactive-"I've written referrals, I've called parents, I've pulled students out of the classroom, talked to them one-on-one. I've tried to be a mediator between the bully and the person being bullied."
8 NTOY	Proactive-"I separate students if I know that I have a student who is, who does pick on another student a lot, I make sure that I have them separated." Reactive-"I don't group them together."
9 RTOY	Proactive-"At the beginning of the year, we have a manners unit. We address it early on. We discuss manners and how we should treat one another." Reactive-No response given.
10 NTOY	Proactive-"I keep my classroom busy." Reactive-"I have a set of rules and consequences. We just kind of follow the consequences on our chart as to what happens if we don't follow the rules."

Table 9 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
11 RTOY	Proactive-"I think the group setting is proactive because it teaches them to work together as a team." Reactive-No response given.
12 NTOY	Proactive-"Even at the beginning of the year, they know very quickly the first day of school that I run that classroom, not them. I tell them what to do; they don't tell me what to do. In my classroom, we respect each other." Reactive-"After an incident has happened, whether another child tells me, whether their parents telephone me or write me a letter, whether it comes from another teacher outside at recess, sometimes it comes from the bus driver. There are so many places where instances or situations occur that are brought to my attention. As soon as I find out about them, I try to take measures immediately, whether it's talking to them, trying to get down to exactly what happened, why it happened, who was at fault and then taking care of the situation as best that I can. Especially make sure that the students are satisfied with the results of whatever that situation was. If the student feels like something happened to them and nothing was done about it, that doesn't do

anything for their self-esteem or it doesn't make them think

we care enough to try to solve the problem."

NTOY 2 opened her response with "Okay, you can't prevent it as far as the first time, but after their first time it can be prevented by warning the students and conferencing with the student that does the bullying." The other teachers seemed to believe that bullying could be prevented or at least reduced by a proactive stance by the teacher. Four teachers, RTOY 1, NTOY 4, RTOY 5, and NTOY 10, discussed the importance of stating and then periodically reviewing the classroom rules. Mentioned in the response to this question and several others was the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In answers to this question and the following one, RTOY 9, RTOY 11, and NTOY 12 all referred to it as "the Golden Rule" and quoted it verbatim, while NTOY 2 paraphrased the saying into "Treat others how you want to be treated." Three teachers of the year, 1, 3, and 9 stressed calling attention to and rewarding acts of kindness. RTOY 1 passed out pencils with the message, "Caught doing good," while RTOY 9 sent home positive notes telling of the child's act of kindness. STOY 3 gave reward stickers on a chart entitled, "Caught Being Good," and selected a citizen of the year based on acts of kindness.

RTOY 7 provided information about a classroom magazine entitled *Smart Decisions* which often deals with the issues of peer pressure, bullying, or self-esteem. She used this magazine as a springboard for class discussions about the topic. This teacher also offered journaling as a vehicle for the prevention of bullying. She assigned topics to generate dialogue or simply read their written

thoughts and interacted with the students, offering to provide help when possible. NTOY 6 also asked students to come to her when they were frustrated or angry, before the situation resulted in violence. NTOY 8 suggested that the teacher be aware of problems between students and physically separate those who do not get along. She stated that she will not place students in the same group who have a history of a strained relationship in which one student has bullied the other. RTOY 5 emphasized closer monitoring of a student having problems with behavior, particularly one who has made threats against another child.

RTOY 5 and NTOY 10 stressed the role of the teacher in maintaining order and keeping the children busy. NTOY 10 emphasized the need for easy transitions from one activity to another. NTOY 12 focused on the teacher as a role model for the students, demonstrating appropriate behavior and treating others with kindness and dignity.

Suggested reactive strategies included talking with the child to find a better way of having handled the problem perceived to have instigated the aggressive episode, writing a letter of apology, calling parents, following the rules and consequences chart established at the beginning of the year, and referral to the office. NTOY 2 made the point that, after the fact, the teacher must reassure the victims that the problem will be taken care of and that they will be safe in that classroom. She also stressed the need for the student, in the event of a reoccurrence, to tell someone about the situation.

Table 10

Interview Question Eight-What are the top three conflict resolution strategies you teach your students?

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	Have students discuss problem and try to resolve it on their own. If they cannot, act as mediator. If that fails, send them to office.
2 NTOY	Treat others the way you want to be treated. Handle yourself.
3 STOY	Write letter of apology. Create a positive attitude. Teach tolerance and acceptance of others.
4 NTOY	Have students discuss the problem and try to resolve it on their own. Act as mediator. Review rules.
5 RTOY	Allow the students to calm down. Discuss the situation and formulate a plan of action for the next time the problem occurs. Suggest other people to play with.
6 NTOY	Tell students to listen to what is being said by the other person, think about the consequences, and walk away.
7 RTOY	Tell students to walk away, tell somebody, and stay in a group.
8 NTOY	Tell students to discuss the problem.
9 RTOY	Tell students to take turns telling their side of the problem, find witnesses to corroborate the story, and accept consequences of their behavior.

Table 10 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
10 NTOY	Tell students to discuss the problem.
11 RTOY	Talk about the Golden Rule.
12 NTOY	Tell students to think before they speak, remember the Golden Rule, and discuss their problems.

Again, three teachers mentioned the Golden Rule, whether paraphrased or by name. The response given most often was to discuss the problem, listed by RTOY 1, NTOY 4, RTOY 5, NTOY 6, RTOY 7, NTOY 8, RTOY 9, and NTOY 10. NTOY 4 suggested using words, not actions to solve problems. RTOY 9 stressed the need for taking turns and allowing each person to tell their side of the problem without interruption. She also included the necessity of finding witnesses, when possible, to corroborate the accounts. NTOY 6 and RTOY 7 both advocated walking away from the problem, with NTOY 6 stating that "it takes a bigger person to walk away than it does for someone to get in a fight." RTOY 11 discussed, in the event of one student repeatedly causing problems, removing that student from the group and assigning them an alternate, less pleasant task.

STOY 3 implemented journal writing as conflict resolution strategy with students writing about their feelings and the teacher responding to them, suggesting alternate ways for dealing with anger. RTOY 5 went so far as to suggest alternate playmates for her third grade students involved in repeated

problems. In the following question, RTOY 7 advocated that the students themselves go through conflict resolution training.

Table 11

Interview Question Nine-What is the policy of your school administration in dealing with bullying?

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	zero tolerance, states may be injustice to victim who reacts in defense
2 NTOY	researcher would need to discuss with the administration
3 STOY	talk with child, talk with parent
4 NTOY	zero tolerance
5 RTOY	talks with parents
6 NTOY	encourages students to talk out their problems
7 RTOY	deals with on a case-by-case basis, talks to whole group
8 NTOY	zero tolerance
9 RTOY	zero tolerance
10 NTOY	conflict resolution plan
11 RTOY	zero tolerance, talk with parent
12 NTOY	serious consequences for misbehavior

Five of the teachers provided zero tolerance as their response to the question of how their administration deals with bullying. These were RTOY 1,

NTOY 4, NTOY 8, RTOY 9, and RTOY 11. Again, RTOY 1, 9, and 11 all teach in the same system leading the researcher to conclude that this might be a system policy. RTOY 1 expressed concern over a perceived flaw in the zero tolerance policy, the fact that both parties in a fight are suspended even if one party has been provoked to the point that they are finally standing up for themselves. She advocated examining the problem to find the cause and then punishing the bully, not the victim. RTOY 9 traced the steps in the administration policy: a written discipline report, detention, then suspension, unless the incident is so severe that it warrants suspension without going through the prior steps. Three teachers of the year, STOY 3, RTOY 5, and RTOY 11 all stated that their administration would get the parents involved in the process. NTOY 10 mentioned a conflict resolution program in place in her school. This program used peer mediators with the older elementary students to help resolve conflicts.

Table 12

Interview Question Ten-Does your school handbook directly address bullying? If not, would you support the addition of such policy? What would you like to see included?

Teacher #	Included in Handbook	Would Support Inclusion
1 RTOY	unsure	yes
2 NTOY	not specifically, but under	no
	label of negative behavior	

Table 12 continued

Teacher #	Included in Handbook	Would Support Inclusion
3 STOY	no	yes
4 NTOY	unsure	yes
5 RTOY	unsure	yes
6 NTOY	no	no
7 RTOY	no	yes
8 NTOY	yes	-----
9 RTOY	unsure	yes
10 NTOY	unsure	yes
11 RTOY	yes	-----
12 NTOY	unsure	yes

Six teachers reported that they were unsure of whether or not their school's handbook addressed bullying. Two teachers, NTOY 8 and RTOY 11, reported that, in their opinion, their handbook did address the issue. This issue was open to interpretation in that their colleagues from the same school, RTOY 7 and NTOY 12, stated that their school's handbook did not address the issue. NTOY 2 believed that that the handbook statement that "all negative behavior is not tolerated" was sufficient to say that the topic was covered.

Although there was disagreement about whether or not the topic was addressed in the school handbook, eight of the teachers stated that they would support the addition of such policy. Of the eight teachers, five were teachers of

the year. Only three of the teachers who had not been recognized as teachers of the year were in favor of adding the bullying policy to the school handbook. In fact, two of the teachers, NTOY 2 and NTOY 4 made negative comments about the inclusion of such policy. NTOY 2 stated that:

Sometimes if you just you know, keep harping on a policy such as no bullying, no bullying, no bullying, it becomes redundant and it's not an important issue. It's something that the kids hear over and over again and they'll get tired of it and they won't respect that rule.

NTOY 4 reported that:

If you put it in there, some people are going to do it and some people aren't. They are all going to take it differently and work it into their own teaching method. I can just see us having it in a teacher's manual, you know. Teach your children to love each other, you know. I want to see that one come back.

Table 13

Interview Question Eleven-Have many professional development activities been offered on this topic in the past two to five years? If so, have you attended? How effective was the presentation and how much of it was beneficial to you personally?

Teacher #	Professional Development Offered	Would Attend
1 RTOY	none	yes
2 NTOY	none	-----
3 STOY	none	yes

Table 13 continued

Teacher #	Professional Development Offered	Would Attend
4 NTOY	mentioned in a workshop	-----
5 RTOY	none	-----
6 NTOY	none	yes
7 RTOY	mentioned in conflict resolution workshop	-----
8 NTOY	none	-----
9 RTOY	none	-----
10 NTOY	none	-----
11 RTOY	none	-----
12 NTOY	none	-----

Ten of the twelve teachers reported that there had been no professional development activities on the topic at all. RTOY 11 reported that there had been an inservice on handling a crisis situation such as a school shooting. NTOY 10 stated that all inservices being offered had to do with the current high-stakes testing in the state. Two teachers reported attending inservices that, although on different topics, mentioned bullying. NTOY 4, a teacher with one year of experience, had attended an inservice about the kindergarten child on which the speaker touched on bullying. RTOY 7 had been a participant in a workshop on conflict resolution and gang-related violence in which the topic of bullying was mentioned. She did go on to say that day-to-day bullying actually had

nothing to do with gang-related violence. Those teachers who addressed the second part of that question regarding whether or not they would attend if a professional development activity on bullying were offered, all indicated that they would indeed attend such a conference.

Table 14

Interview Question Twelve-What is your role in reducing bullying in your classroom and in your school?

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	"state what the rules are in my classroom, what is not allowed and to be aware enough to know if it is, and to stop it in my classroom."
2 NTOY	"monitor my classroom" "nipping it in the bud"
3 STOY	"rewards for being a good citizen and being a good friend"
4 NTOY	"my role is the primary role they see"
5 RTOY	"You need to play a major role."
6 NTOY	"I'm the referee/mediator. My job is to decide if it warrants any further thing."
7 RTOY	"alert the assistant principal"
8 NTOY	"being observant of what's going on" "let our principal know this is what I am observing"
9 RTOY	"As a leader of my classroom, it is my ultimate responsibility to ensure that the children have a safe environment in which to learn."

Table 14 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
10 NTOY	"monitor and be on top of what's going on"
11 RTOY	"treat every student with respect"
12 NTOY	"I have a profound role just because I'm the regular ed teacher."

Responses to this question were varied. Several of the teachers used strong language in answering. NTOY 4 stated that hers is "the primary role they (students) see." RTOY 5 reported that teachers need to play "a major role." RTOY 9 responded that, "As leader of my classroom, I think it's my ultimate responsibility to insure that the the children have a safe environment in which to learn." NTOY 12 declared that:

> I have a profound role just because I'm the regular ed teacher. I'm the one they're with from eight o'clock in the morning to three o'clock in the afternoon. We do switch so they are influenced by other classroom teachers as well, but I think our role as a classroom teacher is profound. I think we have a great responsibility to address it, not only to address it but to take care of any situations that arise concerning bullying and anything related to discipline problems.

Six of the teachers, RTOY 1, NTOY 2, NTOY 4, NTOY 8, RTOY 9, and NTOY 10, all stressed the need for adequate monitoring to prevent bullying. This is important in that teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and routines play a key role in determining the extent that bullying is manifested at school (Olweus,

1995). The fact that these teachers realized the significance of their efforts in monitoring student behavior demonstrated their understanding of this concept.

Two teachers, RTOY 7 and NTOY 8, both from the same school, reported that they would informally alert the administration that they sensed the possibility of a problem. RTOY 7 extended this line of thought to include telling the student's other teachers. This informal networking, possibly suggested by the administration, was seen as a proactive stance to prevent bullying.

Table 15

Interview Question Thirteen-How do your intervention/prevention procedures differ from your fellow teachers and administrators?

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	same as administrators, handle it within own classroom
2 NTOY	does not differ
3 STOY	teacher's personality affects the way they discipline
4 NTOY	wants students to work out problems
5 RTOY	unsure
6 NTOY	same as other teachers, possibly more affectionate
7 RTOY	works with students to solve problems
8 NTOY	same as other teachers
9 RTOY	same as other teachers and administrators
10 NTOY	stricter than other teachers, more consistent

Table 15 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
11 RTOY	more lenient than other teachers
12 NTOY	same as other teachers

Five of the teachers, RTOY 5, NTOY 6, NTOY 8, RTOY 9, and NTOY 12, reported that they did not know if or how their procedures differed from those of their coworkers. A reluctance to discuss their peers was noted. Five teachers, RTOY 1, NTOY 2, NTOY 6, NTOY 7, and RTOY 9, agreed that their intervention/prevention strategies were the same as those of their peers and in line with those of the administration. NTOY 10 claimed that she was stricter than her colleagues, defining stricter as more consistent with the rules and consequences. Two teachers, NTOY 4 and RTOY 11, reported being more lenient than other teachers in their school. NTOY 4, a teacher with one year of experience, related that she focused on getting the students to work out their problems and decide upon a better course of action for the future as opposed to simply punishing them for their actions. RTOY 11 stressed that while she did not want to be the student's friend, she was interested in allowing children to freely voice their thoughts and ideas. She went on to say:

> To me, forming a relationship with your children or your students is why
> we are in this. That, to me, is the most important thing I do every day is to
> have a relationship with these children. It is my job to make sure that that
> relationship reflects the values and morals I believe are best for them. I
> think so many times teachers don't realize the importance of that.

RTOY 9 openly discussed actions of some of her colleagues, without naming them, by stating:

I know there are some teachers will write a referral rather than pull the students out and try to act as mediator. I mean, I know that just from conversation with them. I also know that there are teachers who will let it go and not address it at all.

While NTOY 12 did not openly admit that teachers were failing to address bullying in her school, she did state:

I only know how each teacher feels about it (bullying) personally will affect how it is handled in her classroom. To me, I think it's so important. I would never just let it go. If I ever witnessed someone bullying or being intentionally cruel or hurt someone's feelings, I would never just turn my back and pretend I didn't see it or walk away from it. If I hear it in the classroom, if it means stopping whatever I'm doing in the middle of it, I do.

Table 16

Interview Question Fourteen-To what degree do you view bullying as the cause for school violence and why?

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	"I think to a great degree because that's where a lot of it starts."
2 NTOY	"Sometimes it is a factor."

Table 16 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
3 STOY	"Well, in light of recent events that we've had in our country, I mean it's..., we know about Columbine, we know that that was the cause."
4 NTOY	"I think it has a large degree to do with a lot of it."
5 RTOY	"I think it could be a major cause."
6 NTOY	"A child that bullies another child has home problems or self-esteem problems."
7 RTOY	"I can see where bullying has a direct link."
8 NTOY	"I don't know that I would say that bullying has any more impact on the school violence than playing around, picking with each other."
9 RTOY	"I would think on a scale from one to ten, it would be a nine or a ten because I think that's where most of the school violence stems from."
10 NTOY	"I have a problem with that because all through the years, somebody has been bullied."
11 RTOY	"I look at some of the instances that have happened. It seems like the students who have done a lot of the violent acts, who have committed those violent acts, were bullied at some point in their life and most of the time by students at school. Look at Columbine. They talked about

Table 16 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
	how the students made fun of them, etc. And the little boy at Santana High, the same thing."
12 NTOY	"I think it's probably *the* major reason that violence stems from."

All six teachers of the year responded that they perceived it to be a major cause for violence in the school. Only two of the teachers not recognized as teachers of the year, NTOY 4 and NTOY 12, shared this assessment. NTOY 4 was the teacher with only one year of experience who had attended a professional development activity in which bullying was discussed. NTOY 12 was the teacher who had had the severe problem with bullying in her class this year. These two factors could have influenced these teachers' perceptions.

The other teachers responses ranged from "sometimes it's a factor (NTOY 2)," to "I don't know that I would say that bullying has any more impact on school violence than playing around (NTOY 8)." NTOY 10 reported that:

I have a problem with that because, all through the years, somebody has been bullied. It's gone on for years and years and years. Bullying is not new. We have adults that are still bullies. Maybe it's the times that's making the bullying be more of a cause of school violence and lack of discipline.

Table 17

Interview Question Fifteen-Outline your ideal plan for addressing this issue in classrooms.

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	Begin immediately. Include Character Counts program.
2 NTOY	Unsure.
3 STOY	Designate a week to promote awareness of the problem of bullying.
4 NTOY	Zero tolerance for bullying.
5 RTOY	Get to know children as individuals.
6 NTOY	Communication, trust, love.
7 RTOY	Give teacher input into which students are grouped together in classes, small class sizes, consistency in dealing with the problem, counseling.
8 NTOY	Address at the beginning of the year, promote an awareness of the problem of bullying, zero tolerance.
9 RTOY	Golden Rule, zero tolerance.
10 NTOY	Communication, Character Counts, rules and consequences.
11 RTOY	Character Counts, treat students with respect and expect that they treat others the same, zero tolerance.
12 NTOY	Address the issue in the handbook, open discussions of the problem, conflict resolution.

Teachers' answers were mixed. Several of the teachers expressed the need for time to think about this question before answering. Two of the teachers, STOY 3 and NTOY 8, expressed the need for a program aimed at promoting awareness of the topic of bullying. Three teachers advocated the use of the Character Counts program in addressing the issue in the classroom. Four teachers suggested adopting the zero tolerance policy in dealing with bullying. Only one teacher, RTOY 7, included the use of counseling in creating a plan for addressing the issue in classrooms.

Table 18

Interview Question Sixteen-Is there anything I have not asked about bullying that you would like to share?

Teacher #	Portion of Response
1 RTOY	Stated that addressing bullying is important.
2 NTOY	Nothing.
3 STOY	Offered insight into negative consequences of this type of behavior.
4 NTOY	Nothing.
5 RTOY	Made comment on characteristics of bullies.
6 NTOY	Nothing.
7 RTOY	Related story of daughter's victimization in high school.
8 NTOY	Nothing.

Table 18 continued

Teacher #	Portion of Response
9 RTOY	Nothing.
10 NTOY	Nothing.
11 RTOY	Discussed the role of the mother in nurturing the child.
12 NTOY	Discussed incident in that day's newspaper.

Five of the teachers not recognized as teachers of the year had no further comment on the subject. NTOY 12 reiterated her belief in the importance of addressing the issue in the classroom and described an incident reported in the newspaper. Only one teacher of the year, TOY 9, had nothing further to add. All other teachers of the year concluded with an additional comment. TOY 1 stated that bullying was her pet peeve and related an incident in which a female student was forced to leave the school due to rumors that she was pregnant. TOY 3 offered insight into the negative consequences of bullying once students have left school. TOY 7 gave a detailed account of the bullying that her daughter had endured in high school. TOY 11 discussed the role of mothers in nurturing children, teaching them to love.

<u>Summary</u>

Twelve teachers, including six teachers of the year, either regional or state winners, and six teachers, one from each of the winners' schools, not recognized as teachers of the year were interviewed to ascertain their perceptions of the phenomenon of bullying. Each teacher was asked the same sixteen questions, and responses were recorded in written and audiotaped

formats. These responses were studied using the grounded theory approach to the qualitative analysis of data. Generalizations drawn from the data can be used to enable teachers to determine the effectiveness of their current intervention strategies and implement strategies which might be more successful.

Each teacher's responses showed consistency throughout the interview, the only notable exception being NTOY 8. When asked to what degree she viewed bullying as the cause for school violence, she stated that she did not believe that it had any more impact than simply playing around. She continued the response with an account of an incident in which a group of students retaliated against a student for bullying their friend.

RTOY 1, STOY 3, and NTOY 12 appeared to have the greatest understanding of the phenomenon while the teacher with only one year of experience, NTOY 4, had the least insight. She saw bullying more in terms of absolutes, hitting, pushing, and other forms of aggressive behavior. This teacher admitted to being nervous about the interview, speaking rapidly and frequently asking, "Is that what you are wanting?" NTOY 6 showed considerable empathy for the students in her school, attempting to get students to come to her and talk out their problems before violence occurs. Throughout her answers, she expressed a belief in the innate goodness of the child. RTOY 1 and RTOY 7 also demonstrated concern for their students, talking at length about particular incidents and sharing what they had done to help the victims. Although the teachers discussed different approaches to handling bullying, all teachers showed concern for their students.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS,

AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of selected teachers in reference to the topic of bullying. Regional and state teacher of the year winners were selected for participation in this study due to the fact that these teachers had already been judged by their peers to be outstanding representatives in the field of education. In addition, teachers from the same schools and comparable grade levels were selected as well. These teachers had not been recognized as teachers of the year and served as a contrast to those teachers selected for their award-winning status. Input from these teachers was of benefit in gaining information about the topic. In addition to the teachers' opinions of the extent of the problem, the researcher attempted to determine the successful intervention strategies implemented by the teachers in their efforts to reduce or eliminate the problem.

Letters requesting interviews with teacher of the year regional and state winners were initially sent in November, 2000. Only one teacher responded to the initial request. Follow-up letters were sent in January. Again, only one teacher responded. Other participants were sent a third letter, followed by a personal phone call. One participant agreed to participate after a face-to-face meeting. Securing agreement to participate from the second teacher at the school was much less difficult, but still not a simple task. As a result, the

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researcher was unable to represent a diverse population in the sample in relation to gender and ethnicity. All teachers interviewed were female Caucasians. The demographic information did vary, however, in relation to years of experience, educational background, grade levels taught, and general school population. The teachers' years of experience ranged from one to 28 with a mean of 15. Of the teachers interviewed, four held bachelor's degrees, four master's degrees, two master's plus 30 degrees, and two educational specialist's degrees. Two were kindergarten teachers, one taught first grade, one taught second, two taught third, two taught fifth, one taught seventh, and two taught eighth.

Three of the schools used in the research were considered urban, two were considered to be rural, and one was considered to be suburban. The grade configurations represented were kindergarten through third, kindergarten through fifth, kindergarten through sixth, pre-kindergarten through sixth, seventh and eighth, and kindergarten through twelfth. The schools ranged in student population from 525 to 986. All schools were located in north Louisiana and served varied populations from mostly middle income families.

Discussion of Research Question One

The discussion is divided into two sections, one for each of the two research questions, followed by a summary. The preliminary interview questions address the first research question regarding the degree to which teachers view bullying as a problem in the schools and classrooms. Research question one is specifically addressed in interview questions 1, 2, 4, and 14. In these questions, the teacher is asked to define bullying, tell to what degree she views bullying as a problem in her classroom and at her school, identify

episodes of bullying she has witnessed and tell how she handled the situation, and tell to what degree she views bullying as a cause for school violence.

Teachers' responses to most questions varied considerably, sometimes paralleling and sometimes contradicting generally accepted findings from the review of literature. In defining bullying, teachers were able to provide components of the generally accepted definition of bullying as repeated exposure, extending over a period of time, to negative actions or treatment by a more powerful person or group of people (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Hazler, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, Cox, & Black, 1997). Also key to the definition are an imbalance of strength, either physical or psychological, and a deliberate intention to harm the victim (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Borg, 1999; Craig, 1998; Olweus, 1993; Olweus, 1994; Olweus, 1995). Olweus (1994) also posited that bullying behavior occurs without apparent provocation. None of the teachers' responses included a reference to the components of the definition such as repeated exposure, an extended period of time, an imbalance of strength, or lack of provocation on the part of the victim. The teachers also focused on the bully as an individual, rather than a member of a group. RTOY 7 provided a definition that most closely matched that generally accepted for the term bullying:

> I think bullying is intimidation, it's harassment, I think it includes teasing, making fun of others, taunting. I believe any time a child is made to feel afraid or to feel as though their self-esteem has been injured, that that is a result of bullying.

This teacher worked with eighth graders in a rural K-12 school. In response to later questions, the teacher related her experiences in dealing with

bullying, mentioning one child in particular. Having dealt with this student's bullying behavior gave this teacher a perspective not realized by those teachers who had not dealt with the degree of bullying described.

While research has identified two types of bullying, both overt and relational aggression, the teachers interviewed tended to focus on the physical more than the psychological form, mentioning pushing, hitting, and "bucking." Seven of the 12 teachers used the word *intimidation* in their definition, while three used the word *aggressive*. Both intimidation and aggression were suggestive of overt bullying which has been defined as behavior that harms others through physical damage or the threat of such damage with relatively open attacks on the victim (Crick, 1997; Olweus, 1994; Tomado & Schneider, 1997). Five of the teachers included in their definition the verbal aspect of bullying, including teasing, taunting, "making fun of," "saying mean things," or "cutting someone down." This verbal abuse was still considered to be overt rather than relational aggression in that it was not done for the purpose of damaging or manipulating peer relationships, considered components of the definition of relational aggression (Crick, 1995; Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996; Crick et al., 1997; Crick et al., 1999; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996).

When asked to what degree bullying is a problem in their classroom and at their school, all 12 teachers suggested that the problem exists in their schools but eight of the 12 stated that it was not a problem in their classrooms. These findings support O'Moore's (2000) conclusion that teachers tend to underestimate the level of bullying among schoolchildren. Of the four teachers who stated that bullying was a problem in their classroom, two teach eighth

grade, one fifth grade, and one first grade. This was in line with the findings that, when asked to identify the grade level in which victims are most severely bullied, students rated grades seven through nine as the most prevalent (47%), grades four through six as second most prevalent (31%), grades one through three third (13%), and grades nine through twelve as least prevalent (9%) (Hazler et al., 1991).

Three of the teachers addressed the issue of the location where bullying takes place, positing that it occurs during times that are less strictly supervised. This observation supported the negative association between teacher density during recess or break time and the number of bully/victim problems (Brody, Stoneman, & Wheatley, 1984; Slee & Rigby, 1994). RTOY 7, who teaches eighth grade in a K-12 school, posited that bullying episodes take place at recess break and lunch break. RTOY 9 told of incidents in the bathroom and on the bus. NTOY 10, a kindergarten teacher, suggested that the playground was the site of most bullying and that the behavior increased in the upper grades of her Pre-K-6 school. Her observations supported the findings of Borg (1999) and Smith (1997) that the two places where bullying takes place most often are the classroom and the playground and also the findings of Hazler et al. (1991) that bullying is more prevalent in the upper than the lower elementary grades.

In reference to the consequences of bullying, teachers were asked to what degree they viewed bullying as the cause for school violence and why. Eight of the teachers interviewed, including all six teachers of the year, stated that they viewed it as a major cause. Of the others, one teacher offered that sometimes it is a factor. Three teachers, not recognized as teachers of the year, stated that they did not know if bullying was a cause of school violence. One

eighth grade teacher, NTOY 8, commented that, "I don't know that I would say that bullying has any more impact on school violence than playing around." NTOY 10 reported that she was unsure that bullying was the cause of today's school violence in that bullying was not a new phenomenon.

While the majority of the teachers viewed bullying as a major cause for school violence, none of the teachers interviewed discussed the consequences of this type of behavior for the bully and only three teachers mentioned negative consequences for the victim. These teachers seemed to have limited understanding of, while other teachers were unaware of, the ramifications of bullying on the victim such as loss of self esteem (Rigby, 1996; Rigby & Slee, 1999), anxiety, depression, loneliness (Boivin, Hymel, & Bukowski, 1995; Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Egan & Perry, 1998; Hoover & Anderson, 1999), school avoidance (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1992; Eslea & Smith, 1998; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Rigby, 1996; Slee & Rigby, 1994; Smith, 1992; Vail, 1999), poor academic performance (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Vail, 1999), peer rejection, and a limited number of friends (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997; Rigby, 1996). The teachers also failed to mention ramifications for the bullies themselves: the likelihood of criminality and alcohol abuse (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; Olweus, 1993) or marital problems or child and spousal abuse (Hoover & Anderson, 1999). Two of the teachers made reference to violent incidents that had taken place at Columbine and Santanta High Schools and an even more current event, a school shooting in their hometown of Monroe, LA.

In discussing bullies, three of the teachers discussed characteristics known to be untrue. NOTY 2 stated that bullies are insecure while NTOY 6 and

NTOY 12 reported that they were lacking in self-confidence. This was in direct contrast to findings that bullies do not suffer from poor self-esteem, showing instead unusually low levels of anxiety and insecurity (Olweus, 1994; Pearce & Thompson, 1998). Three of the teachers, TOY 1, NTOY 2, and TOY 3, did, however, discuss the bully's need to dominate or exert their authority over someone else. This was in agreement with a strong need to dominate others as stated by Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Lagerspetz (1998).

Little was said regarding characteristics of victims. Three of the teachers, (TOY 11 and NTOY 12), both from the same school, and RTOY 1 addressed in their response the issue of what might make someone a victim. RTOY 11 identified possible issues such as physical appearance or lack of participation in sports. RTOY 1 and NTOY 12 mentioned lack of physical size, strength, or intelligence, or the fact that the victim could be easily intimidated. This was significant in that RTOY 11 and NTOY 12 had dealt with a serious incident during this school year in which a male student was labeled with a derogatory term. The student's parents had sent certified letters to the teacher, the principal, and the local school board regarding the problem. RTOY 1 related three specific incidents: one in which the victim was physically bullied, one in which the victim was sexually harassed, and one in which the student was the victim of relational aggression to the point that she was forced to change schools. Having dealt with these situations gave these teachers a broader perspective, one that focused on the victim as well as the bully. The responses of these three teachers were in line with the findings that victimized children tend to be physically weak (Egan & Perry, 1998; Smith, 1997; Smith & Brain, 2000), different in appearance (Hoover & Oliver, 1996), or easily intimidated (Boivin &

Hymel, 1997; Egan & Perry, 1998; Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Perry, Williard, & Perry, 1990; Schwartz, Dodge, & Coie, 1993). RTOY 1 showed empathy with the victims, relating specific instances in which she came to the aid of the victims, all of whom were in her school but specifically assigned to her class. Overall, teachers in this study maintained the dyadic focus on the bully/victim relationship, never discussing other roles such as bystander, assistant, reinforcer, or defender (Cowie, 2000).

Summary of Responses to Research Question One

Although teachers were able to provide components of the generally accepted definition of bullying, they did not demonstrate an understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. They had limited understanding of the ramifications of bullying on either the victim or the perpetrator. All twelve teachers suggested that the problem exists in their schools but eight of the 12 stated that it was not a problem in their classrooms. When asked to what degree they view bullying as the cause for school violence, eight of the 12 stated that they viewed it as a major cause.

Discussion of Research Question Two

Research question two dealt with interventions the teachers had implemented in dealing with the problem of bullying. This question was addressed in interview questions 3, 5 through 13, and 15. Questions 3, 5, and 6 dealt with classroom management techniques used to create a positive learning climate. Questions 7, 8, and 12 addressed specific intervention strategies used by the teacher. Interview questions 9, 10, 11, and 13 dealt with administrative issues such as the school handbook and professional development activities.

The teacher was allowed to outline her ideal plan for addressing the issue in question 15 and share anything she would like to add in question 16.

In discussing the role of the teacher, responses were varied. Several of the teachers used strong language in answering this question. NTOY 4 stated that hers is "the primary role they (students) see." RTOY 5 reported that teachers need to play "a major role." RTOY 9 responded that, "As leader of my classroom, I think it's my ultimate responsibility to insure that the the children have a safe environment in which to learn." NTOY 12 declared that:

> I have a profound role just because I'm the regular ed teacher. I'm the one they're with from eight o'clock in the morning to three o'clock in the afternoon. We do switch so they are influenced by other classroom teachers as well, but I think our role as a classroom teacher is profound. I think we have a great responsibility to address it, not only to address it but to take care of any situations that arise concerning bullying and anything related to discipline problems.

The fact that no person in school spends more time with students than the teacher makes the teacher the most visible model for either positive or negative behavior (Hazler, 1996). RTOY 11 and NTOY 12 focused on the teacher as a role model for the students, demonstrating appropriate behavior and treating others with kindness and dignity. Again, these two teachers had dealt with a serious incident during the current school year, increasing their sensitivity to the importance of their role in preventing bullying.

The strong language used in formulating responses to this question indicated that these teachers had an understanding of the importance of their role in reducing or eliminating bullying in their classroom and at their school.

According to Olweus (1993, 1994), an important factor in determining the extent of bullying in a school or a classroom has been the attitude of the teacher.

Six of the teachers, TOY 1, NTOY 2, NTOY 4, NTOY 8, TOY 9, and NTOY 10, all stressed the need for adequate monitoring to prevent bullying. This is important in that teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and routines play a key role in determining the extent that bullying is manifested at school (Olweus, 1995). The fact that these teachers realized the significance of their efforts in monitoring student behavior demonstrated their understanding of this concept. An important characteristic of bullying is that bullies engage in the aggressive behavior only as long as they are able to get away with it with with little or no punishment (Horne & Socherman, 1996). If these teachers realize that their being observant will make a difference, they will tend to be more vigilant in their monitoring. NTOY 12 made the comment that, "Actual observations, you know those are really hard to catch because they are smart enough to make sure no one is around, especially an adult, when they do things like this."

Two teachers, RTOY 7 and NTOY 8, from the same school both reported that they would informally alert the administration that they sensed the possibility of a problem. RTOY 7 extended this line of thought to include telling the student's other teachers. This informal networking, possibly suggested by the administration, was seen as a proactive stance to prevent bullying.

To deal effectively with the problem of bullying, it must first be seen as a problem by all stakeholders: faculty and staff, parents, community, and students (Limper, 2000). Researchers have suggested being proactive, attempting to prevent bullying rather than simply responding to it (Limper, 2000; Litke, 1996; Myles & Simpson, 1994; Roberts & Coursol, 1996). Two of the teachers, STOY

3 and NTOY 8, expressed the need for a program aimed at promoting awareness of the topic of bullying. Three teachers advocated the use of the Character Counts program in addressing the issue in the classroom. Four teachers suggested adopting the zero tolerance policy in dealing with bullying. Eleven of the twelve teachers interviewed stated that the parameters for acceptable behavior should be set at the beginning of the year.

Only one teacher, RTOY 7, included the use of counseling in creating a plan for addressing the issue in classrooms. Roberts and Coursol (1996) stressed the need for both immediate response and long-term committment in counseling the victims of bullies. Counseling services for bullies were found to be most effective when there was an emphasis on the development of skills to replace aggressive behaviors with more appropriate ones. Victims have been shown to benefit from assertiveness and social skills training. RTOY 7 suggested that students would benefit from conflict resolution training. According to the 1987 National School Safety Center Report, schools should implement strategies specific to the problem of aggression, of which conflict resolution could be considered a part.

Another suggestion for curbing bullying offered by eight teachers, five of whom were teachers of the year, was to address bullying in the school handbook. Olweus (1993) suggested developing a code of student conduct or revising the current code, with student input, to include provisions to deal with bullying and both student/student and student/faculty interactions. The attitude that bullying, fighting, and other aggressive behaviors are a normal part of growing up must be changed (Barone, 1997; Vail, 1999). Schools must promote the belief that aggressive behavior is completely unacceptable. Bullying and

other forms of aggression must be dealt with quickly and effectively, and schools should work to teach alternatives to these behaviors.

Although the teachers were reluctant to discuss the actions of their colleagues, two teachers, RTOY 9 and NTOY 12 both made strong statements about failure to address the issue of bullying in the classroom. RTOY 9 stated:

I know there are some teachers will write a referral rather than pull the students out and try to act as mediator. I mean, I know that just from conversation with them. I also know that there are teachers who will let it go and not address it at all.

While NTOY 12 did not openly admit that teachers were failing to address bullying in her school, she did state that a teacher's personal feelings about the issue would affect the way the issue was handled in the classroom. She voiced a committment to addressing the issue.

There is evidence that students are reluctant to tell school authorities that they are being bullied (O'Moore, 2000; Shakeshaft et al., 1997). According to Shakeshaft et al. (1997), typical adult responses to allegations of harassment at school discourage students from further reports. These responses seldom curbed harassment and left students feeling that they had no place to turn for help. In some cases, the staff penalized the victim for reporting the offense. This gave the victims the sense of having been violated twice—first by the harassment and then by the treatment of the adults and other students. In the question about proactive/reactive strategies to deal with bullying, NTOY 2 addressed this issue by stating:

The reactive is, that after it's (bullying) been done, you have to reassure the student that's been bullied that it will be taken care of and that they

will be safe in your classroom and if there is a problem, they have to report it.

Ten of the twelve teachers reported that there had been no professional development activities offered on this topic. The two teachers who reported that they had attended a professional development activity on this topic stated that it was mentioned as a part of another subject. All teachers who responded to the question about whether they would attend a workshop on this topic all indicated that they would. In general, researchers have found that teachers do relatively little to stop bullying (Olweus, 1994). Given that teachers are the key to change, their attitudes, behaviors, and routines play a major role in determining the extent that the problem of bullying is manifested in schools (Olweus, 1995; O'Moore, 2000). To effect any real change in preventing or alleviating bullying, there must be an emphasis on teacher training, particularly in the areas of self-esteem and conflict resolution (O'Moore, 2000).

Summary of Responses to Research Question Two

Teachers seemed to grasp the significance of their role in reducing or eliminating bullying in their classroom and at thier school, stressing the need for adequate monitoring. Only two of the teachers expressed a belief in the need for a program aimed at promoting an awareness of the topic of bullying. Eight teachers suggested addressing bullying in the school handbook promoting the belief that aggressive behavior is unacceptable. One teacher advocated both the use of counseling and conflict resolution training. Teachers were reluctant to address the actions of their colleagues but two made strong statements regarding failure to address bullying. Ten of the 12 teachers stated that they were unaware of any professional development activities addressing bullying

but responded positively when asked if they would attend if a session were offered.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

Teachers interviewed for this study had a limited understanding of the phenomenon of bullying, particularly in the area of relational aggression. In general, the teachers demonstrated comprehension of the fact that bullying could be verbal or physical but failed to grasp the psychological component. All 12 teachers admitted that bullying existed in their schools but eight of the 12 stated that it was not a problem in their classrooms, supporting the conclusion that teachers tend to underestimate the level of bullying (O'Moore, 2000).

Eight of the 12 teachers, including all six teachers of the year, viewed bullying as a major cause of school violence. They did not understand the ramifications of this behavior for the victim or the bully, the exception being the school shootings that had taken place within the past five years. Several teachers expressed the mistaken belief that bullies were insecure or lacking in self-confidence. Only two of the teachers expressed an opinion on what might make a person a victim of bullying behavior.

Intervention strategies suggested included creating, at the beginning of the year, a positive climate that values individual differences. Two teachers suggested fostering a "family" atmosphere within the classroom, building a sense of belonging for students. All twelve teachers valued group work as a means for making students become an accepted member of the group. The value of praise was stressed. Also suggested was the implementation of character building programs such as Character Counts. Several teachers advocated the use of the Golden Rule in teaching students how to deal

appropriately with others. One teacher proposed stricter adherance to the rules and consequences, while another proposed using student journals as an avenue for communication between teacher and student. All teachers agreed that having the students discuss the issue would be beneficial.

Teachers seemed to comprehend the importance of their role in reducing or eliminating bullying in their classroom, particulaly in the area of monitoring student behavior. Two of the teachers expressed the need for a program aimed at promoting an awareness of the topic of bullying. Eight teachers, five of whom were teachers of the year, advocated addressing bullying in the school handbook. Ten teachers stated that there had been no professional development activities offered on this topic but indicated that they would attend if it were offered. This indicated a willingness on their part to learn more about how to deal with bullying. Given that teachers are the key to change, this willingness to address the issue was promising.

<u>Recommendations and Implications for Practice</u>

Bullying, generally defined as repeated exposure to negative actions or treatment by a more powerful person or group of people (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Hazler, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, Cox, & Black, 1997), is a serious problem in schools today. Bullying may be the most common form of violence in schools and the behavior that is most likely to to affect the greatest number of students. Given the ramifications of bullying behavior for both the victim and the bully, schools must address the issue. Bullying is an intentional act that can be controlled only through strong committment and concerted action on the part of all involved: school personnel, parents, and children (Ross, 1996).

Teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and routines play a major role in determining the extent to which problems will be manifested in a school or classroom (Olweus, 1995). According to research by O'Moore (2000), teachers in 25% of primary schools and 51% of secondary schools do not recognize bullying as a serious issue. Teachers must be educated as to the consequences of this type of behavior. Teachers' attitudes toward bullying is critical in that it sets the parameters for the general level of aggression considered to be acceptable in society (Pearce & Thompson, 1998).

Given that these 12 teachers, six of whom were teacher of the year winners at the regional or state level, had limited understanding of the phenomenon of bullying, it can be concluded that these findings could be generalized for teachers throughout North Louisiana and possibly throughout the nation. Eight of the 12 teachers, including all six teachers of the year, viewed bullying as a major cause of school violence, but did not understand the ramifications for either the victim or the bully. Until teachers realize the seriousness of this type of behavior, they will not fully understand the importance of their role in eliminating bullying in their classroom and at their school. Ten of the teachers stated that there had been no professional development activities offered on this topic. The two who had attended a professsional development activity told that it was briefly mentioned as part of an activity on a related topic, such as conflict resolution.

Researchers have suggested being proactive, attempting to prevent bullying rather then simply responding to it (Limper, 2000; Litke, 1996; Myles & Simpson, 1994; Roberts and Coursol, 1996). To deal effectively with bullying, it must be seen as a problem by all stakeholders: faculty and staff, parents,

community, and students (Limper, 2000). All parties need to be educated as to what constitutes bullying and how it can be prevented. This should begin with the faction that has the most significant role in determining the extent that the problem of bullying is manifested in schools–the teacher. Teachers must be educated as to what bullying is and its consequences. They must be taught to effectively monitor to prevent bullying from taking place and to respond when it does.

Given the significance of the teacher's role in determining the extent of this problem, efforts should be made to educate educators about bullying. These 12 teachers, six of whom had been recognized as regional or state teachers of the year, had limited understanding of this phenomenon. Schools need to take a stand on the issue, educating all stakeholders on the ramifications and establishing the message that bullying will not be tolerated. Based on findings of this study and research examined in the review of literature, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools should provide professional development activites to educate teachers regarding bullying and the ramifications of this type of behavior. Many teachers are unaware of the consequences of allowing bullying to continue and are not adeuqately monitoring student behavior. Schools should become more specific in defining and more stringent in enforcing teachers' responsibilities in monitoring students, particularly in those areas such as hallways and playgrounds known to be preferred locations for bullying.

2. Following the professional development activities on the topic, schools should devote staff development sessions to the discussion

of the problem within the school. Exemplary teachers should be encouraged to share their expertise in handling this type of behavior, offering insight to those teachers not as adept in dealing with bullying.

3. Schools should conduct surveys of all stakeholders to determine the extent of bullying within their own settings. Information gathered from these surveys should be used to implement schoolwide interventions targeted at eliminating this type of behavior. Bullying should be addressed in the student handbook. Provisions should be made for reporting this type of behavior. School counselors should be available to work with both victims and bullies.

4. Teachers should establish parameters for acceptable behavior at the very beginning of the school session. Teachers must convey the message that bullying, whether overt or relational, will not be tolerated. All incidents must be addressed.

5. Teachers need to make the effort to get to know their students as individuals and demonstrate that they, as teachers, value the diversity within the classroom setting. Students should be allowed the opportunity to share their feelings with the teacher whether through general discussion or on a more personal level such as through a journal.

Implications for Further Research

Based upon the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research in this area:

1. Due to the small number of and lack of diversity among participants in this study, it should be replicated with a larger number of participants representing a larger geographic area and a more diverse background before it can be generalized to a larger population.

2. In order to determine the impact of the research on those teachers who participated, a summary of the findings of the study should be provided to them. A follow-up study should then be conducted at the end of the 2001-2002 school year to determine whether insight gained as a result of participation in the study altered teachers' perceptions of or responses to the phenomenon in the year following participation in the project. This project could be extended to include teachers throughout the nation invloved in professional development on the subject of bullying. Analysis of this data would provide insight into which types of programs are most successful in combatting bullying.

3. A study could be undertaken to determine whether preservice teachers are being exposed to this topic in current education programs, how effective this exposure is if it is taking place, and what could be done to better prepare preservice teachers for dealing with bullying in their classrooms.

4. Further research should be conducted into a component of bullying mentioned by a teacher in the study, that of teacher-to-student rather than student-to-student bullying. While this aspect of bullying was not

mentioned in research analyzed for this project, it is a component worthy of additional research. This type may indeed be one of the most detrimental to students in that teachers are endorsing this type of behavior by virtue of their actions.

5. In light of incidents of school violence in the nation's schools which purportedly occurred as a response to bullying episodes and the lack of research conducted in American classrooms, additional studies should be taken to provide a deeper understanding of bullying in this country.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Bullying is a serious problem in America's schools with approximately 20% of the nation's children involved as either victims or bullies. This does not even take into account those students playing a more indirect role such as bystander. The teacher plays a key role in determining the extent of bullying in the classroom and at the school, setting the parameters for the acceptability of this type of behavior. Teachers interviewed for this study had a limited understanding of the phenomenon and its consequences for both the victim and the bully. Three of the teachers made statements about bullies known to be untrue.

All 12 teachers admitted that bullying exists but eight of the 12 stated that it was not a problem in their classroom, supporting the conclusion that teachers tend to underestimate the level of bullying that occurs. While the teachers were familiar with overt bullying, they demonstrated little understanding of relational aggression. When asked to what degree they viewed bullying as a major cause for school violence, eight of the teachers interviewed, including all six teachers

of the year, stated that they saw it as a major cause. However, three teachers stated that they did not know if bullying was a cause of school violence. Several of the teachers did comprehend that they, as the teacher, did play a critical role in determining the extent of this type of behavior. Six of the teachers stressed the need for adequate monitoring to prevent bullying.

The teachers suggested ways of addressing bullying in the school as well as the classroom, offering suggestions such as addressing the subject in the student handbook, providing counseling, and promoting communication between the student and the teacher through the use of student journals. Teachers stressed the need for creating a positive educational climate, beginning the first day of class. Several of the teachers interviewed mentioned including a character education program such as Character Counts as a means of fostering a positive climate. The teachers did suggest the need for professional development activities in which to learn more about the subject.

Given the teachers' limited understanding of bullying, several steps should be taken to address this issue. Since the role of the teacher is crucial in the process, attention should be given to making educators aware of the definition and ramifications of bullying. Schools should devote staff development sessions to addressing this topic, allowing those teachers who are successfully tackling the issue to share tactics with others. School-wide surveys should be conducted to determine the extent of the problem, providing information necessary to address it. All stakeholders should be made aware of the issue.

Bullying is a serious issue with implications for schools throughout the country. By failing to address the issue, schools are actually condoning this type

of behavior. A greater understanding of student victimization can lead to increased awareness and vigilance by teachers. Teachers are the key to change.

APPENDIX A

COPY OF THE TEACHER INTERVIEW DOCUMENT

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TEACHER INTERVIEW DOCUMENT

Name_____School_____
Parish_____ Category_____
Educational Background_____
Years Experience_____Grade Level Currently Teaching_____
Years in Current Grade Level_____
Description of School's Physical Environment_____
_____
_____
_____

Description of Student Population_____
_____
_____

1.How do you define bullying?

2.To what degree is bullying a problem in your classroom and at your school?

3.   What do you do in your classroom to create a positive educational environment?

4. Identify episodes of bullying that you have observed in your classroom and on your school campus. Explain how you handled the situation.

5.   What do you do to help social isolates in your classroom become accepted by their peers?

6. What do you do in your classroom to assure that all of the students work together?

7. What proactive measures have you undertaken to prevent bullying? What reactive measures have you taken?

8.What are the top three conflict resolution strategies you teach your students?

9. What is the policy of your school administration in dealing with bullying?

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10. Does your school handbook directly address bullying? If not, would you support the addition of such policy? What would you like to see included?

11. Have many professional development activities been offered on this topic during the past two to five years? If so, have you attended? How effective was the presentation and how much of it was beneficial to you personally?

12. What is your role in reducing bullying in your classroom and in your school?

13. How do your intervention/prevention procedures differ from your fellow teachers and administrators?

14. To what degree do you view bullying as the cause for school violence and why?

15. Outline your ideal plan for addressing this issue in classrooms.

16.Is there anything I have not asked about bullying that you would like to share?

APPENDIX B

APPROVAL FOR USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS FORM

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The following is a brief summary of the project in which you have been asked to participate. Please read the information before signing the statement below.

TITLE: A Study of Teachers' Perceptions of and Interventions in Episodes of Bullying in Schools

PURPOSE OF STUDY/PROJECT: To investigate the perceptions of selected teachers in reference to the topic of bullying.

PROCEDURE: Selected teachers will be asked to respond to 16 questions on the topic of bullying. The interviews will be recorded through the use of note-taking strategies supplemented by the use of audiocassettes.

INSTRUMENTS AND MEASURES TO INSURE PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMITY: The instrument used for this project is a set of questions, developed by the researcher, about the topic of bullying. Data collected will remain confidential.

RISKS/ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS: There are no risks associated with participation in this study. Participation is voluntary.

BENEFITS/COMPENSATION: None.

I, _____, attest with my signature that I have read and understood the description of the study, "A study of teachers' perceptions of and interventions in episodes of bullying in schools," and its purpose and methods. I understand that my participation in this research is strictly voluntary. Further, I understand that I may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any questions. I understand that the data from my interview will be confidential. I have not been requested to waive nor do I waive any of my rights related to participation in this study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

CONTACT INFORMATION: The researcher listed below may be reached to answer questions about the research, subjects' rights, or related matters.

Carynn Wiggins   home-123 Turkey Creek Rd. Ruston, LA 71270   318-255-1029
                 work-A. E. Phillips Laboratory School
                     P. O. Box 10168 Ruston, LA 71272   318-257-3469
                     email-cwiggins@aep.latech.edu   fax-318-257-3676

The human subjects committee of Louisiana Tech University may also be contacted if a problem cannot be discussed with the researcher.

Dr. Mary Livingston   257-4315
Dr. Terry McConathy   257-2924

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VITA

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She began her teaching career at Clara Hall Elementary in Monroe, Louisiana where she taught for three years before moving to Ruston, Louisiana where she began teaching at Hico Elementary. Following several years at Hico, Mrs. Wiggins moved to A. E. Phillips Laboratory School at Louisiana Tech University where she served as kindergarten teacher for eleven years. After serving as a classroom teacher for 22 years, Mrs. Wiggins accepted a position as the principal for the school.

In addition to teaching courses at Louisiana Tech University, Mrs. Wiggins has served as a resource speaker at local, state, regional, and national conferences. Her topics have included bullying, innovative teaching techniques, and parental involvement. When not busy pursuing these interests, Mrs. Wiggins enjoys spending time with her family--her husband Ronnie and children Jordan, Brennan, and Madison.

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