

Individualizing Interventions For ESL Students Involved In Bullying And Victimization

by Zopito A. Marini, Beth Koruna and Andrew V. Dane

Abstract

School bullying is a serious psychosocial and educational problem for students and teachers alike. One obstacle to understanding and preventing bullying is that the phenomenon is a more heterogeneous concept than was originally believed, including a range of subtypes characterized by whether the bullying is reactive or proactive, direct or indirect, and whether the participants are dually involved in bullying and victimization.

It appears that each subtype is somewhat unique, not just in the form and function of bullying, but in the risk factors involved. Therefore, a major goal of the present paper is to delineate the heterogeneity of bullying, and to explore possibilities for individualizing interventions to meet the specific needs of students involved in the various subtypes of bullying.

We intend to illustrate how teachers of ESL students may adapt and individualize well-established cognitive-behavioural programs for preventing and reducing bullying to best meet the needs of students experiencing these difficulties, including the implementation of school-based intervention strategies for addressing bullying situations that are sensitive to cultural contexts.

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Introduction

Research has shown that school bullying, a subtype of peer aggression characterized by the repeated and systematic abuse of physical and psychological power, is a serious and pervasive problem for students and teachers alike (Marini, McWhenie & Lacharite, 2004; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefooghe, 2002). Involvement in bullying is associated with a range of psychosocial problems including low self-control, peer rejection, poor academic performance, high acceptance of antisocial behaviour and psychiatric difficulties such as conduct and anxiety disorder (Coie, Dodge & Kupersmidt, 1990; Loeber, Green, Lahey & Kalb, 2000; Haynie et al., 2001; Olweus, 2001; Nansel et al., 2001; Rigby, 2001). Furthermore, students with behavioural problems can divert precious instructional time, and other resources, from other students and thus create difficulties for both the teachers and other pupils (Nucci, 2006). In addition, students who are victimized often report an array of internalizing difficulties related to anxiety, depression and self-esteem (Craig, 1998; Grills & Ollendick, 2002). These negative outcomes, which can continue beyond the school years, highlight why it is important for teachers to be aware of these problems in the school, and why it would be worthwhile to implement school-based interventions to prevent and reduce bullying and victimization.

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Bullying is likely to be an issue of particular concern for teachers of ESL (English as a Second Language) students. While there is a paucity of bullying research directly involving ESL students, a number of possible links can be drawn to suggest that these particular students may be susceptible to victimization because of possible social isolation, loneliness and lack of close friends. Because of the intertwined nature of the factors contributing to bullying involvement, it is difficult, if not impossible, to examine the extent and nature of bullying and victimization involving ESL students. In other words, due to their complex profile, and the way in which they are studied, it is difficult to determine whether some ESL students may get picked on because of their low language proficiency, their ethnicity or even cultural practices and religious background. For example, there is some research suggesting an increased risk of victimization among ethnic minority students (Hanish & Guerra, 2000) as well as increased classroom aggression as a function of a more diverse ethnic composition (Rowe, Almeida & Jacobson, 1999). In addition, Elsea and Mukhtar (2000) reported that cultural, religious and language differences amongst students of different ethnic minority groups were perceived as factors that would precipitate bullying. In some cases, however, careful attention must be given in differentiating reported and perceived bullying and victimization. For instance, in one study there was no significant difference between students from various ethnic groups in their reported experience of bullying (Seals & Young, 2003); however, ethnic minority students have been found to perceive themselves as more likely to be victimized than their peers of the ethnic majority (Siann, Callaghan, Glissov, Lockhart & Rawson, 1994). Other research suggests the possibility that the relation between ethnicity and victimization might be connected to broader social processes such as the size of a child's friendship network. In this vein, it has been shown that, amongst ethnic students, the more friends they had the less likely they were to be victimized, and vice versa (Mouttapa, Valente, Gallaher, Rohrbach & Unger, 2004). These results are similar to those reported in the general literature, which predominantly involves non-ESL students (Schwartz, McFayden, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1999; Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, Bates & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2000). Although there is little direct evidence that ESL students are at greater risk for bullying and victimization, it seems reasonable to conclude based on research pertaining to ethnic, cultural and religious minority students that issues relating to bullying and victimization may be a particular challenge that ESL students must face. However, we must bear in mind that it is not clear whether students are victimized because of their minority status per se, or that it may be a part of complex social processes that comprise the peer relations of students who differ ethnically, linguistically or culturally from the majority of the student body. Despite the limitations of this research, these studies do suggest that teachers of ESL students should be aware of the potential for problems with bullying and victimization in the classroom.

The main purpose of the present paper is to discuss how teachers may adapt and individualize well-established cognitive-behavioural strate-

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gies for preventing and reducing bullying to best meet the needs of particular students with these difficulties. One obstacle to understanding and preventing bullying and victimization is that bullying is a more heterogeneous concept than was originally believed (Little, Brauner, Jones, Nock & Hawley, 2003; Toblin, Schwartz, Hopmeyer-Gorman & Abou-ezzeddine, 2005). For instance, there appear to be several subtypes or variations of bullying, characterized by differences in the manifestation of the bullying behaviour, such as whether it is reactive or proactive, direct or indirect. In addition, a significant number of bullies (about 33%) are dually involved in bullying and victimization (Marini, Dane, Bosacki & YLC-CURA, 2006). The literature suggests that each subtype is somewhat unique, not just in the form and function of bullying, but in the sense of having differential etiological profiles or risk factors. Thus, one goal of the present paper is to delineate the heterogeneity of bullying, and to explore possibilities for individualizing interventions to meet the specific needs of students involved in the various subtypes of bullying. In addition, we intend to illustrate how such teachers of ESL students may adapt intervention strategies for addressing bullying to be sensitive to the cultural context.

Subtypes of Bullying: Differentiating the Forms from the Function (i.e., Motives)

As already mentioned, recent research has revealed that bullying is best characterized by its heterogeneity in both the forms used to carry out the attacks as well as the function served for the attacker. For example, much of the research on bullying has focused on direct or overt aggression, which includes observable confrontations involving physical and verbal attacks (Marini et al., 2006; Olweus, 2001). Increasingly, more attention has been focused on indirect types of bullying, in which attacks are carried out in a more covert manner, by means of spreading rumours, excluding people from groups or persuading or daring a peer to harm another student (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz & Kaukiainen, 1992; Crick & Nelson, 2002; Vaillancourt, Brendgen, Boivin & Tremblay, 2003).

Studies have indicated that there are key differences in the risk factors associated with direct versus indirect bullying, including social-cognitive biases, the presence or absence of internalizing problems, peer relationship difficulties and temperament (Dodge & Pettit, 2003). Compared to non-aggressive youngsters, aggressive children have been shown to encode social situations less accurately, are more likely to attribute hostile motives to people in ambiguous social situations, generate more aggressive solutions to social problems and evaluate these aggressive responses more positively (Crick & Dodge, 1994). In addition, aggressive children generally tend to deem aggressive and antisocial acts as more acceptable and less wrong than do their non-aggressive counterparts (Zelli, Dodge, Lochman & Laird, 1999). The pattern of social information processing deficits for indirectly aggressive children differs in some key ways from that of their directly aggressive counterparts. Notably, consistent with directly aggressive children, indirectly aggressive youngsters

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have been shown to make more hostile intent attributions than non-aggressive children (Crick, 1995; Crick & Werner, 1998; Crick, Grotpeter & Bigbee, 2002). However, directly aggressive children are prone to making hostile attributions regarding instrumental provocation situations (e.g., a peer breaks a child's radio while the participant is out of the room), whereas indirectly aggressive children evince such biases in respect to relational provocation situations (e.g., a child overhears children talking about a party to which they were not invited) (Crick et al., 2002). In addition, there is little evidence that indirectly aggressive girls have deficits in the later steps of social information processing; in particular they do not seem to evaluate indirectly aggressive responses more positively than non-aggressive children (Crain, Finch & Foster, 2005). Indirectly aggressive boys evaluate relationally aggressive responses to instrumental conflict more positively than non-aggressive children, but this was not the case for responses to relational conflict (Crick & Werner, 1998).

Students involved in direct and indirect bullying may also differ in their level of social competence, insofar as indirect bullying has been associated with a higher level of social intelligence than direct bullying (Kaukiainen et al., 1999). This finding makes some sense theoretically in that one would seem to need considerable social skill to persuade peers to exclude a particular student from a given social group, or to sow dissent and discord that would motivate peers to act aggressively toward the targeted child. However, the research in this area is quite complex, in that both direct and indirect bullying have been associated with deficits suggesting limitations in social skill, including low empathy and greater susceptibility to peer rejection (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Kaukiainen et al., 1999).

Researchers have also distinguished bullying done proactively from that which is a reaction to provocation. Reactive bullying involves a more immediate reaction to a perceived provocation, usually driven by frustration, instantaneous emotional release, defense against a perceived threat, and general lack of inhibition (Dodge & Coie, 1987; Poulin & Boivin, 2000). This type of abrupt reaction has also been labelled as self-defensive aggression and tends to be generally impulsive, accompanied by visible hostile expressions, and carries a great deal of strong negative emotions (see Poulin & Boivin, 2000; Pulkkinen, 1996). In contrast, proactive bullying entails more deliberate and methodical planning of attacks, using aversive acts to obtain instrumental or social goals, such as stealing lunch money or bidding for popularity or social status (Poulin & Boivin, 2000; Camodeca, Goossens, Meerum-Terwogt & Schuengel, 2002). In general, proactive bullying tends to entail unprovoked, goal-directed, predatory and deliberate acts (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Pellegrini, Bartini & Brooks, 1999).

As was the case with direct and indirect forms of bullying, studies have indicated that bullying with a proactive function is associated with different psychosocial risk factors than is bullying that is reactive. For instance, in relation to social information processing, students who report engaging in reactive bullying are also more likely to report social-cognitive difficulties in the initial stages of processing social information, related to difficulties with encoding and interpretation of cues (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996). Thus, reactive bullies faced with am-

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biguous provocation are more likely to exhibit social-cognitive bias and interpret the provocation as hostile when the intention was actually unclear (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996), though age seems to play a role, with the younger children showing more hostile attributions. However, these individuals did not seem to show difficulties with the later stages of processing social information, as they were able to generate non-aggressive responses to social problems and evaluate likely outcomes as well as non-aggressive students (Crick & Dodge, 1994). In contrast, proactive bullies were more likely to report difficulties with the latter stages, generating more aggressive solutions to social problems, evaluating these as effective means to meet their goals, and underestimating the potential damage that bullying tactics may inflict on relationships. In addition, relative to non-aggressive peers, proactive bullies are more likely to expect aggression to yield tangible rewards (e.g., obtaining a desired item, winning a game) and to minimize the damage that such tactics might inflict on relationships (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996). In regard to peer relationships, reactive aggression tends to be associated with peer rejection and elevated levels of victimization, whereas proactive aggression is not linked to these outcomes (Price & Dodge, 1989; Schwartz et al., 1998). In fact, students who use proactive aggression are generally viewed less negatively, being seen by peers as popular, having a sense of humour and as good leaders (Luthar & McMahon, 1996; Price & Dodge, 1989; Salmivalli, 2001). Although there seem to be developmental differences, with clearer and more consistent results for younger children, the overall pattern is nevertheless quite suggestive (Price & Dodge, 1989).

“Students who report engaging in reactive bullying are also more likely to report social-cognitive difficulties...”

Heterogeneity in Involvement: The Bully-Victim

Another question that should be asked to determine the best means of helping a bully to change his or her behaviour is whether that individual is also victimized by peers, since victims of bullying often report an array of internalizing difficulties related to anxiety, depression and self-esteem (Craig, 1998; Grills & Ollendick, 2002). Although most studies have focused predominantly on bullies and victims, in a recent study we found that about 33% of the students who reported high levels of experience with either bullying or victimization were dually involved in both (Marini et al., 2006). In view of their combined involvement in bullying and victimization, this emerging group is quite likely to experience more, or at least different, psychological or social difficulties than either bullies or victims.

Although available evidence is sparse, bully-victims exhibit a wide range of maladjustment including internalizing problems, peer rejection, a relative lack of close friendships, greater acceptance of deviance, and less optimal temperament characteristics such as hyperactivity and negative emotionality (Craig, 1998; Haynie et al., 2001; Kumpulainen, Rasanen & Henttonen, 1999; Pellegrini et al., 1999; Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002; Schwartz, 2000; Xu, Farver, Schwartz & Chang, 2003). Furthermore, their aggression tends to be reactive in nature (Schwartz, 2000). Examining this range of deficits, it seems

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that bully-victims evince a detrimental combination of impairments that are characteristic of both victims and bullies. For example, bully-victims appear to be similar to bullies and unlike typical victims insofar as they exhibit externalizing problems such as hyperactivity and reactive aggression, as well as beliefs supporting antisocial behaviour (Haynie et al., 2001; Pellegrini et al., 1999; Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002). Similarly, they demonstrate internalizing problems and peer relational difficulties that are more consistently observed in victims than in bullies (Kumpulainen et al., 1999; Pellegrini et al., 1999). Schwartz and his colleagues (see Schwartz, Proctor & Chien, 2001) have suggested that the common risk factor predisposing bully-victims to both bullying and victimization, and which might explain the wide-ranging deficits just described, is difficulty with the regulation of emotions. In other words, these individuals tend to be emotionally reactive, prone, for example, to over-reacting to provocation such as peer teasing with an explosive outburst. Their predisposition to frustration and anger may render them more susceptible to being aggressive, whereas their emotional volatility may alienate peers and set them up as targets of bullying (Marini et al., 2006; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Voeten, & Sinesammal, 2004).

Effective intervention requires recognition of the pervasive, systematic and heterogeneous nature of bullying behaviour, making it important to assess the type of aggression the children in a given school are using. While there are no shortages of bullying questionnaires available, at the very least teachers and school personnel should have a good understanding of their students by making sure they have some answers to the following three general questions, including: 1) what form or type of aggression is used in bullying? (i.e., direct or indirect), 2) what function does the bullying serve? (i.e., reactive or proactive), and 3) what type of involvement does the student experience? (i.e., bully or bully/victim).

Strategies for Preventing and Reducing Bullying

The school is an ideal place to intervene, as it is the site where peers come together and bullying is most likely to take place. Moreover, Galloway and Roland (2004) stated that bullying interventions need to begin with pedagogy; ideally intervention should be ingrained into everyday learning. In school-based interventions, teachers and other personnel such as youth workers are provided with instructional materials and training to help them become facilitators of some of the key program components (Cross, Hall, Hamilton, Pintabona & Erceg, 2004; Galloway & Roland, 2004; Limber, Nation, Tracy, Melton & Flerx, 2004; Pepler, Craig, O'Connell, Atlas & Charach, 2004; Salmivalli et al., 2004). School-based interventions include the following elements: (1) school-wide code of conduct; (2) monitoring of bullying behaviour; (3) classroom curricula including social-skills programs.

***“Emotional volatility
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School-wide Code of Conduct

In the whole school approach to intervention, it has been stressed that there is a need for consistent codes of behaviour across the whole school, rather than having rules that vary across classrooms. School behaviour codes are meant to create an atmosphere in which bullying is clearly regarded as intolerable (Cross et al., 2004; Hanewinkel, 2004; Limber et al., 2004; Stevens, Van Oost & Bourdeaudhuij, 2004). A key feature of this component is that school-wide rules facilitate consistency in behavioural expectations, as well as in the consequences for violations of the code, across administrators, teachers, youth workers, and other school personnel. Such a code increases the likelihood of behavioural change. Under such a system, students are less likely to regard discipline encounters as arbitrary and unfair because of the openness and transparency of the code of conduct. It should also be emphasized that children need positive reinforcement from teachers when they demonstrate desired behaviours in bullying situations (Limber et al., 2004; Hanewinkel, 2004; Stevens et al., 2004).

“...children need positive reinforcement from teachers when they demonstrate desired behaviours...”

Monitoring of Bullying Behaviour

In many interventions, teachers are given information that would help them to recognize the many facets of bullying, so that they can then take on the role of intervener on the playground and in the classroom. This aspect of intervention is designed to increase the extent to which incidents of bullying are monitored (Limber et al., 2004; Pepler et al., 2004; Stevens et al., 2004). It dovetails nicely with the school-wide code of conduct, in that teachers or other personnel witnessing bullying on school property could then apply the appropriate consequences, as specified in the code. In addition, the monitoring of bullying at school would also provide teachers with opportunities to reiterate and reinforce concepts and skills taught to students in class-wide social skills lessons, as described below. Salmivalli (1999) also stated that teachers could help by using a structural intervention approach in the classroom. Specifically, when teachers become aware of isolated students or cliques that engage in indirect or direct bullying, they can try to facilitate the formation of new peer groups that include students who would otherwise be excluded, and to prevent harmful antagonism between rival cliques or individuals.

Classroom Curricula

Teachers can also use program materials to integrate bullying intervention into everyday curriculum. Open dialogue to raise awareness of bully-

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ing is often the first step taken in the classroom (Craig, Pepler & Atlas, 2000; Limber et al., 2004; Pepler, Craig, O'Connell, Atlas & Charach, 2004; Salmivalli, 1999; Samivalli et al., 2004; Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004). Having open discussions about feelings and emotions of the children in each role promotes an enlightened understanding, or empathy, for those involved in bullying episodes (Craig et al., 2000). A second step is to foster self-reflection in regard to what roles children play in bullying (Salmivalli et al., 2004; Salmivalli, 1999). Strategies for intervention with the peer group are often geared to a group of children referred to as bystanders, which in turn is comprised of three general subgroups. One subgroup consists of observers, children who play a vital role in supporting a bully by the act of watching and letting it happen (Marini et al., 2004). Some of these children are labelled reinforcers; they support bullies by cheering and encouraging them. In contrast, defenders are those that console victims or stand up to bullies for the victim (Salmivalli, 1999). One of the main goals of school intervention is to lessen the number of observers and reinforcers, and increase the number of children that feel confident enough to intervene or defend. O'Connell, Pepler and Craig (1999) stated that children often have positive intentions to help their peers, yet they hesitate for reasons such as peer pressure, fear and lack of skills. Using role-playing as a venue to practice adaptive strategies can be beneficial for these children because researchers reason that students are more likely to act as a defender in everyday situations if they feel comfortable and capable of doing so (Craig et al., 2000; Salmivalli, 1999). Acting as a defender may involve a range of responses, from urging observers and reinforcers to walk away from the incident, thereby denying the bully attention from an audience, to obtaining the assistance of an adult such as a teacher or playground supervisor. If students feel sufficiently confident and competent, they may try telling the bully to STOP in an assertive tone.

Teachers may also address bullying through the use of a number of available curricula that outline cognitive-behavioural skills that students may use to reduce incidents of bullying in the school (Cross et al., 2004; Marini et al., 2004). With this step, the teacher is placing responsibility on the students to manage conflict situations and to intervene and help peers who may be targeted for bullying (Salmivalli et al., 2004; Craig et al., 2000; O'Connell et al., 1999). An example of a comprehensive program to prevent and reduce bullying is FAST Track (see Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999, 2000). The goals of this program are to reduce aggressive behaviours and to improve the child's relationship with parents, teachers and peers by teaching cognitive-behavioural skills necessary to engage in effective emotion regulation and social problem solving.

Although the FAST-track program is multi-faceted, including home visits and case management for at-risk families, parent management training to enhance the effectiveness of parental discipline, child tutoring in reading, and child friendship enhancement in the classroom (i.e., Peer Pairing), we would like to highlight the cognitive-behavioural skills that may be taught in the classroom to reduce bullying, which in this program were embedded in a classroom-based curriculum called PATHS and in smaller Friendship Groups designed to teach social skills to at-risk students. A major program component is teaching prob-

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lem-solving skills, which are designed to address cognitive distortions in social information processing by changing the faulty thinking, which subsequently can lead to changes in behaviours (Kazdin, 2003). Through the use of instruction, practice (i.e., role play) and feedback, students are presented with problem-solving steps, including defining the problem and interpreting the situation, thinking of multiple possible responses, evaluating the positive and negative consequences of each, and deciding what to do. For example, the problem-solving approach can be used to help students decide how to deal with being teased by peers. Teachers may ask students to generate a list of possible responses to this situation, which might include ignoring it and walking away, using a humorous comeback, asking them to stop in an assertive manner, or getting angry and retaliating. By evaluating the positive and negative consequences of each of the above responses, the teacher can demonstrate the overall advantages of the pro-social, constructive and assertive strategies relative to an angry or aggressive reply. While angry retaliation may offer temporary relief from teasing, teachers can show through this problem-solving exercise that the accompanying drawbacks, such as alienating peers and placing themselves at risk for disciplinary action from teachers, outweigh this limited benefit.

An additional strategy called cognitive restructuring is typically used to counter hostile attribution biases, whereby children are taught to consider both sides of the story in a difficult peer situation, to recognize that more benign explanations of a peer's intentions are also plausible. With regard to peer teasing, teachers may illustrate that teasing is not always done maliciously or with intent to cause harm. Alternative interpretations can be suggested, including that the children might be joking, or that the teasing may be focused on something external to the child (e.g., a favourite hockey team, a transitory incident like tripping) rather than being directed at an attribute or property of the child per se, which may reduce anger and other negative emotions that might otherwise be triggered. Self-talk or self-instruction may also be used to enable students to exert self-control in emotionally charged situations (Lochman & Wells, 2004). For example, children may learn to calm down and to stop and use problem-skills, by making statements to themselves such as "calm down, don't lose control." Social skills are also taught within this program, with a view to enhancing children's peer relations, and thereby reducing conflict situations that may lead to bullying and victimization. This component includes instructions and step-by-step practice with friendship-making skills such as using humour effectively, initiating conversations, joining in games and turn taking (see Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999).

Effectiveness and Limitations in Bullying Interventions

School-based programs for the prevention and reduction of bullying and victimization have been shown in numerous studies to be effective, particularly in the short-term, in enabling students to learn the program skills, reducing student behavioural difficulties and improving peer relations (Conduct

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"A major program component is teaching problem-solving skills..."

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Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999; Schneider, 1992; Smith et al., 2004). However, each program has also been found to have important limitations (Smith, J.D., Stewart & Cousins, 2004). Specifically, children participating in these programs are quite successful in learning skills that would facilitate social adjustment; however, they seem to have more difficulty transferring the use of these skills to everyday situations that involve heightened emotions and greater complexity than scenarios practiced in role-plays (Beelman, Pflingsten & Loesel, 1994; Schneider, 1992). Furthermore, evidence of long-term behavioural changes is weaker than that for shorter-term improvements (Schneider, 1992). Thus, to make improvements in these programs, it may be essential to individualize interventions to address the specific needs of students, tailoring the intervention to the various subtypes of bullying or to allowing for cultural considerations.

Individualizing Interventions

The interventions described above do not seem to allow for heterogeneity in bullying or in the cultural-linguistic make-up of the students. In the following section, we will consider some of the ways in which established interventions for bullying and aggression might be individualized to address the particular needs of individuals involved in different kinds of bullying.

Individualizing Programs for Indirect Bullying

Let us begin by considering the implications of the distinction between indirect and direct bullying. One key difference pertains to the form of bullying itself. Indirect bullying is more covert, in the sense that the perpetrator may escape detection and that the damage done to the victim may be less obvious than the physical pain inflicted through direct bullying. It is clear from the literature that victims of indirect bullying suffer internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression, low self-esteem, and have social difficulties including being rejected by their peers (Crick, 1996; Crick & Dodge, 1994). What is less clear is whether children and teachers are fully aware of just how harmful acts such as social exclusion and the spreading of rumours can be. On some level, such acts of aggression might be dismissed as childish games that have no serious consequences. Therefore, it may be advisable to include a psychoeducational component in school-based programs, whereby children and teachers discuss the damaging effects of indirect bullying, to build empathy for the victims. Similarly, teachers might stress the importance of including all children in social groups or activities, regardless of their popularity or any differences, including cultural-linguistic ones, that might otherwise single them out for victimization. Furthermore, making reference to the roles that children take in bullying situations, teachers might emphasize that supporters and bystanders make indirect bullying possible. For a child to be excluded and ostracized, or be the victim of a rumour, supporters must cooperate with the indirect bully in forming a coalition against an unliked

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“Self-talk or self-instruction may also be used to enable students to exert self-control ...”

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peer, and bystanders must let it happen without comment. A major goal of this psychoeducational component might be to encourage supporters and bystanders to become defenders of the victimized child, by refusing to exclude him or her from social activities and by actively seeking to include isolated and rejected children in games and group activities that might occur on the playground.

Given the lack of outcome research, it is unclear whether cognitive-behavioral components of bullying prevention programs, which have been used as an effective intervention for direct bullying and aggression, would be equally effective as a means to address indirect bullying. In any case, it seems likely that such programs may need to be modified in view of the differences between direct and indirect bullying. As discussed earlier, indirect bullies seem to possess a higher degree of social competence than direct bullies, showing fewer deficits in social information processing and scoring higher on a peer-rated measure of social intelligence (Kaukiainen et al., 1999; Crick & Dodge, 1994). Several lines of evidence suggest that indirect bullying could be a defensive response to distrust or jealousy in peer relationships, rather than a problem with social skills, and hence, intervention programs may need to be adjusted accordingly. Specifically, indirectly aggressive individuals have demonstrated hostile attribution biases, a preference for exclusive friendships wherein the friends play predominantly with each other, and are more likely than nonaggressive youngsters to be insecurely attached to parents, which is thought to engender insecurity in social relations (Crain et al., 2005; Grotzinger & Crick, 1996; Marini et al., 2006). In line with cognitive restructuring methods whose purpose is to challenge and revise personal stories or narratives that support maladaptive behaviour, including narrative therapy (White, 1991; White & Epston, 1990) and the STORIES program (Telgasi & Rothman, 2001), teachers could challenge the underlying beliefs about self and others that may spark jealousy and insecurity that could in turn give rise to indirect bullying, thereby reducing the motivation for involvement. The gist of this approach is to identify distorted, unreasonable or biased assumptions that students may make to explain difficulties that they may be experiencing, for example, being too hard on themselves, or jumping to unreasonable conclusions about why other students said or did something to them. A teacher may take such opportunities, where feasible, to point out alternative interpretations of the situation, to highlight a more constructive or positive way of thinking, and to underline that the biased thinking previously displayed by the student is unrealistic and potentially harmful.

“Teachers might stress the importance of including all children in social groups or activities...”

Individualized Interventions for Proactive and Reactive Bullying

The differential psychological and social profiles of reactive and proactive bullies suggest that individualized interventions may be needed to address the deficits and biases that are most germane to each subtype. For instance, reactively aggressive bullies demonstrate hostile attribution biases to a greater extent than do proactive bullies, and they have been shown to have

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more social difficulties, including a higher level of victimization and peer rejection, and less popularity with peers (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Poulin & Boivin, 2000). To address these specific issues, an individualized program for reactive bullies might give greater emphasis to cognitive restructuring exercises that teach these students to interpret social situations in a more balanced way, recognizing that there are two sides to a story. For example, if a reactively aggressive bully is excluded from a game, she might assume that it is because she is disliked by the peers involved, but she would be taught to consider other plausible interpretations, such as that the maximum number of players for the game were already playing. Self-control strategies such as coping self-talk, relaxation and distraction exercises may also help reactively aggressive bullies to manage their anger in stressful or frustrating circumstances (Lochman & Wells, 2004). To improve peer relations, reactive bullies may also benefit from social skills training, whereby they receive step-by-step practice with friendship-making skills such as how to initiate conversations, join in games, use humour, engage in turn taking and reciprocity (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999).

In contrast, proactively aggressive bullies may need the main emphasis to be on problem solving. Social information processing research has shown that, in comparison to nonaggressive children, they evaluate aggressive solutions to social problems as yielding more positive outcomes (Crick & Dodge, 1996). Therefore, the challenge with proactive bullies may be to convince them that there are better ways to achieve their goals than using aggressive strategies, which they seem to view as effective and useful. To persuade them otherwise, extra time may need to be invested in getting these children to consider both the positive and negative consequences of aggressive and nonaggressive tactics, so that the benefits of nonaggressive approaches are more apparent to them.

In essence, the key task for those working with proactive bullies is to convince them that they can achieve the social and instrumental goals that they desire more effectively through nonaggressive means. For example, it might help to suggest that whereas in the short run they can manipulate other children successfully through the use of force and intimidation, and they may even receive positive feedback and admiration from some people for doing so, in the long term, these benefits will be outweighed by negative consequences such as losing friends, annoying and alienating people, and having numerous stressful and difficult disciplinary encounters with teachers and parents. Nonaggressive strategies, such as negotiation and assertiveness, would enable them to achieve the same short-term outcomes without the long-term drawbacks. In contrast, reactive bullies may be easily persuaded that their behaviour is problematic, and may be open to trying other alternatives, but they may need additional assistance controlling emotional, impulsive outbursts of aggression in the midst of a stressful social interaction.

Individualized Intervention for Bully-Victims

Students who participate in bullying and also experience victimization may also require an intervention that is tailored to their particular needs. As discussed

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“Indirect bullying could be a defensive response to distrust or jealousy in peer relationships.”

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in detail above, bully-victims differ from bullies in having particular difficulties with emotion regulation and having greater internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression (Marini et al., 2006; Schwartz et al., 2001). To address these unique issues, it may be advisable to provide interventions that give particular emphasis to self-control skills and to supplement cognitive-behavioural components targeting aggression and bullying with those that have been used to deal with anxiety and depression.

The Coping Power program designed by John Lochman and colleagues (Lochman & Wells, 2004) is a cognitive-behavioural program targeting aggression and bullying, which includes components that explicitly address the issue of emotion regulation. Specifically, children are taught to use coping self-statements (e.g., OK, cool down, don't lose control) to reduce anger that might arise during a provocative peer interaction, such as being teased. Coping self-statements might also be used to remind the child to stop and think rather than acting impulsively in response to a social problem, perhaps cueing the child to use problem-solving skills to identify an adaptive solution. In addition, distraction and relaxation techniques are used to reduce angry arousal. Given their susceptibility to emotional dysregulation and reactive aggression, bully-victims may need extra practice with these components.

Cognitive-behavioural programs for anxiety and depression in children and adolescents have similar components to those for aggressive children, and it would therefore seem feasible to incorporate elements of these programs into cognitive-behavioural approaches used to address bullying per se. For example, Kendall and colleagues (Kendall, Aschenbrand & Hudson, 2003) have developed a program whereby anxious children are taught to recognize thoughts that contribute to anxiety, to challenge them, and ultimately to replace them with more adaptive and more realistic thoughts that reduce anxiety levels. To give a concrete example, a student may learn to recognize that his anxiety levels rise when he assumes that all of his classmates would "think he is stupid" if he were to give an incorrect answer in class. Instead, he may be encouraged to take a more realistic view, recognizing that everyone makes mistakes, and that when other people make mistakes, he does not usually think badly of them. To reinforce this perspective, the student might use some encouraging self-talk, such as "It's OK to make mistakes; it's how we learn." For programs targeting bully-victims, this cognitive restructuring exercise might be a useful supplement to those typically used to address cognitive distortions relating to hostile attribution biases (e.g., Lochman & Wells, 2004).

Bully-victims are also more likely than pure bullies or comparison children to face problems with depression (Craig, 1998; Marini et al., 2006). Consequently, it may be necessary to combine cognitive-behavioural components that target depression with those typically used in the treatment of aggression. There are a number of effective cognitive-behavioural programs for the treatment of depression in children and adolescents (Weisz et al., 2003; Clarke, DeBar & Lewinsohn, 2003). Consistent with the approaches that target aggression, these programs include problem-solving components used to identify adaptive strategies for dealing with stress (see description of problem-solving

“Nonaggressive strategies, such as negotiation and assertiveness, would enable them to achieve...short-term outcomes without the long-term drawbacks.”

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steps in section entitled “Classroom Curricula”), and cognitive restructuring exercises designed to identify, challenge and replace negative thoughts that exacerbate depression (as described above in regard to anxiety).

Decreasing levels of depression and anxiety around peer victimization would be beneficial in itself for bully-victims, but it may have the added benefit of reducing factors that create situations in which aggressive confrontations are likely to arise. For one thing, to the extent that it improves peer relations, it may reduce the potential for conflicts leading to aggression. In addition, aggression is more likely to take place when an individual is in a negative mood (Berkowitz, 1993), so a reduction of anxiety and depression may reduce the tendency for bully-victims to engage in explosive, emotional and reactive aggression (Salmivalli et al., 2004).

Individualizing Interventions to address Cultural Diversity

The cognitive-behavioural components of bullying prevention programs might easily be adapted to address the specific issues that might make ESL students vulnerable to experiencing bullying and victimization. For instance, problem-solving exercises could be used by teachers to facilitate student thinking about cultural-linguistic issues that may commonly give rise to bullying or victimization.

Specifically, the first step in problem-solving is to identify and define the problem (e.g., Kazdin, 2003), which may allow students and teachers to discuss common triggers of student conflicts, especially as they relate to insensitivity to cultural diversity.

Cognitive restructuring exercises might also be adapted to enhance perspective taking. Teachers may use this approach to challenge cultural biases that their students may show, by pointing to exceptions and inconsistencies that do not fit with a student’s biases or distorted assumptions about another culture or ethnicity. Social skills that facilitate friendship-making could also be adapted by ESL teachers to accommodate variations in social practices across cultural groups.

For example, social skills relating to joining a group activity might be taught to address cultural differences in shyness and assertiveness, and similarly, cultural variations in emotional expression could be dealt with in a social skills lesson on how to deal effectively with peer teasing.

Conclusions

Research clearly indicates that bullying and victimization are major social and educational concerns that threaten the well-being of students and undermine the educational initiatives of teachers by diverting time and resources

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“It’s OK to make mistakes; it’s how we learn.”

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from educational to behavioural issues. The purpose of this paper was to highlight the fact that there are important variations in the way that bullying may be manifested in schools and classrooms and to indicate crucial differences in the functioning and psychosocial adjustment of these students. We have made several suggestions regarding the potential benefits of adapting existing, well-established programs for preventing bullying, to address variations in the subtypes of bullying that ESL teachers may witness in the school, and to ensure that these attempts to intervene are sensitive to cultural diversity. ❖

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