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# School-based bully prevention and violence

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## Abstract

This paper reviews the literature available on several bully prevention/violence awareness programs. Also discussed is the significance of prevention programs and the roles they can play in today's school systems. It includes a definition of bullying behavior and describes the several types of bullying prevalent in schools today that most programs attempt to address. Additionally, it includes a brief history of bully prevention programs, with a look at the zero tolerance movement, an initiative that has not been overly successful in the past with regards to aggression in schools.

The paper also explores the effects of bullying on the victim and includes a review of recent research on preservice teacher reactions to school-ground teasing. Following that are descriptions of several programs that have been found to be successful or partially successful in reducing aggression. The composition of each program is included and the strengths and limitations intrinsic to the initiative are examined. Elements necessary to make a program successful are discussed in the conclusion.

# School-Based Bully Prevention and Violence Awareness Programs

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## Abstract

This paper reviews the literature available on several bully prevention/violence awareness programs. Also discussed is the significance of prevention programs and the roles they can play in today's school systems. It includes a definition of bullying behavior and describes the several types of bullying prevalent in schools today that most programs attempt to address. Additionally, it includes a brief history of bully prevention programs, with a look at the zero tolerance movement, an initiative that has not been overly successful in the past with regards to aggression in schools. The paper also explores the effects of bullying on the victim and includes a review of recent research on preservice teacher reactions to school-ground teasing. Following that are descriptions of several programs that have been found to be successful or partially successful in reducing aggression. The composition of each program is included and the strengths and limitations intrinsic to the initiative are examined. Elements necessary to make a program successful are discussed in the conclusion.

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School-Based Bully Prevention and Violence Awareness Programs

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature available on bully prevention and violence awareness in schools. The paper will focus on school-based prevention and awareness programs and will examine the merits and outcomes of some programs already in place. It will also look at the history of bullying in schools and why it has become such a widespread concern in current times. There are three main types of bullying that will be focused on: *verbal, physical*, and *teasing* or *taunting.*

*"Setting the Stage"*

"Youth between the ages of 12 and 24 face the highest risk for non-fatal assaultive injury of any age group in this country" (Bosworth, 1999, p. 3). In 1993 over 56% of 6,504 students in grades 6 through 12 polled stated that bullying was the most common occurrence of aggressive behavior at their school (Nolin, Davies, & Chandler, 1999). Fifty-six percent of the same sample also reported that they had witnessed an incidence of bullying or physical attack at their school (Nolin et al., 1999). Though statistics like these have gained national attention, there is an important distinction that should be noted when reading this information. There is a difference between *seeing* the bullying incident and actually being *involved* in the event. There are relatively few individuals involved in actual bullying scenarios: the victim and the aggressor(s). Rarely are there more than one or two primary instigators and usually only one victim.

Nevertheless, schools are doing what they can to raise awareness of the feelings of anger and helplessness that victimized children feel, because though there may be only a few individuals involved in relation to the school population, the consequences can be far-reaching and may unfortunately have lethal results. Using bully prevention

and violence awareness programs as an early intervention tool, school administrations can divert potentially dangerous instigators by giving them appropriate tools to help with anger management, social ineptness and feelings of exclusion by peers. According to research done in Sweden, 60% of boys who are bullies in grades six to nine have at least one court conviction by age 24 (Marano, 1995). Bully prevention and violence awareness are not just aimed at the instigators of violence but also the victims of hostility. "Bullying has detrimental psychological effects on children such as low self-esteem, depression, and suicide" (Petersen, Reese, Skiba, & Russell, 2000, p. 127).

Bullying can have harmful, long lasting effects on students (Petersen et al., 2000). When looking for prevention programs, the seeker should concentrate on comprehensive school-based bully prevention programs encompassing many aspects while addressing the needs of the victim as well as the aggressor. Ideally any program that has been empirically shown to be successful can be implemented. The sad truth is that many school districts alone do not have the financial resources to implement a drastic change (Arnette & Walsleben, 1998). This is why, when looking at prevention programs, an inclusive program will incorporate many supports already in place, such as parent-community involvement, curriculum changes, conflict resolution tools, and the benefits of peer mediation. In the following section, articles concerned with the prevalence of bullying incidents, the history of prevention programs, and the success of some implemented bully prevention programs will be discussed. As will be seen, most of the selected initiatives incorporate the aspects that make a program both comprehensive and successful.

*Definitions Used Throughout the Paper*

Though there is no one commonly used definition of bullying, researchers have identified three essential elements; (a) bullying involves a pattern of repeated aggressive behavior with negative intent directed from one child to another where there is a power difference, (b) there's either a larger child or several children picking on one, or a child who is clearly more dominant; (c) the bully's target has trouble defending him/herself and the bully's aggressive behavior is intended to cause distress (Marano, 1995).

An April 1998 Juvenile Justice Bulletin incorporates verbal harassment in the definition of bullying by saying,

> bullying involves repeated, negative acts committed by one or more children against one another. These negative acts may be physical or verbal in nature – for example, hitting or kicking, teasing or taunting – or they may involve indirect actions such as manipulating friendships or purposely excluding other children from activities (as cited in Arnette & Walsleben, 1998, p. 3).

Though both previous definitions encompass the necessary elements that constitute a physical confrontation, only the second mentions another form of bullying more formally known as *relational aggression.* Relational aggression has come to be known as the "invisible problem," since so many elements are at work when relational aggression takes place (Leff, Power, Manz, Costigan, & Nabors, 2001). Relational aggression is open to interpretation by not only the victim, but also the aggressor. When teachers are asked to intervene, adult knowledge about the students involved is also incorporated (Leff et al., 2001). It has been found that relational aggression is not only as prevalent as physical bullying or aggression, but just as damaging to victims (Leff et

al., 2001). Relational aggression includes gossiping, excluding others from group events, and withholding or withdrawing friendships (Leff et al., 2001). Female aggressors are often the perpetrators of this type of hostility, and are usually the experts at manipulating relationships (Leff et al., 2001).

As noted above, bullying behavior often implies a power imbalance between the aggressor and the victim. When one child is able to bully or harass another child with impunity and feels not only comfortable doing so, but knows it is highly unlikely that he/she will be punished for it, a definite abuse of power is in play (Arnette & Walsleben, 1998).

Previously, the *action* of bullying has been discussed. What has not been addressed is what makes a bully act the way he/she does. In the *Bullying Guidelines for Schools*, a bully is defined as, "a person behaving in a way which might meet needs for excitement, status, material gain or group process and does not recognize or meet the needs and rights of the other people/persons who are harmed by the behavior" (as cited in Cleary, 1998, p. 4). What are the intentions associated with the bully's behavior? Often bullies are seen as mean kids who push others around to get what they want. The above definition introduces the desire for social status, material gains, or a need for excitement. Bullies are fulfilling a perceived need, but doing so at the expense of others' individual rights.

Trial and error has helped many schools recognize the need to address the cause of the action, rather than just deal with the results. Identifying and treating the root of the behavior, while possibly more time- and financially-intensive, will theoretically prevent further incidents. Historically it has been difficult to persuade school administrations

and distraught parents that there is such a need, when the desire for justice or retribution is so immediate. With this in mind, the Zero Tolerance movement took a solid hold of the country in the mid to late 1990's. Spurred by its application to weapons and drug control in schools, aggressors were harshly punished to often counterproductive levels (Bear & Manning, 2002). There was little to no emphasis on working through the issue with either the victim or the aggressor; events were dealt with as they came on an individual basis. Prevention initiatives could be found in small pockets of the country, but had not yet gained recognition as a viable alternative. Many of the programs that will be discussed later address treating the cause of the action, rather than the result of the action. This is accomplished by helping aggressors find socially appropriate tools to meet their perceived needs.

While the national trend swung toward Zero Tolerance and its punitive measures, the other half in a bullying scenario was still receiving only token attention. As with aggressors, the victim was dealt with on an individual basis, usually by the teacher or guidance counselor. Rarely do victims of aggression step forward and alert adults to the situation. In fact, some research has found that victims will stay in a hostile peer confrontation even when given the opportunity to leave, because to them negative peer attention is better than no peer attention (Marano, 1995). More common is parental action on behalf of the student, especially when they are older (e.g. middle or high school).

Cleary (1998) defines a victim as, "a person or group that is harmed by the behavior of others and who does not have the resources, status or ability to counteract or stop the harmful behavior" (p. 4). Historically, in an effort to provide victims with the

resources to stop the harassment, students were, in effect, "bully-proofed." They were sent to self-defense classes, given boxing lessons, karate lessons, and social training (i.e. role plays or scenarios) by parents or older siblings (Cleary, 1998). While these may be helpful in self-esteem building, generalizing these skills to the playground or lunchroom can be difficult, especially for a student who has been bullied in the past. Many prevention programs still focus on stopping the behavior from the aggressors' position, but there are those that also incorporate a counseling element for victims.

# Chapter 2

## *Review of the Literature*

### *The Prevalence of Bullying*

Researchers who first studied bullies and their behaviors in the United States found that incidents of peer victimization occur in American schools at a comparable rate to the schools in England, Canada and Ireland, but more than in the schools of Scandinavian countries (Marano, 1995). This is logical when it is taken into account that Dan Olweus, a known researcher and prevention advocate in the field of bullying, has been a presence in Scandinavian countries for more than 30 years now. It is known that bullying exists, in varying degrees, in virtually every Westernized culture. It has become a serious problem in Japan. In China, national attention is just now being applied to gathering prevalence statistics (Marano, 1995). In the United States, it can be seen that bullying is not limited to "inner-city" schools. If anything it is more prevalent, as well as more vicious, in rural schools with a much smaller population (Marano, 1995).

Bullying in schools has often been seen as a type of "rite of passage" for children. School-ground bullying, even when reported, was usually ignored or given token attention (Dunn, 2001). Craig and Pepler (1997) say that, "bullying is often tolerated and ignored. Some have estimated that teachers rarely detect this problem and only intervene in 4% of all incidents" (as cited in Petersen et al., 2000, p. 127). Another alarming statistic states, "in 400 hours of videotaped episodes of bullying at school, teachers noticed and intervened in only 1 out of every 25 episodes" (Brendtro, 2001, p. 47). The parents of the victim often had to become involved before a concerted effort was made to halt the bullying process. Even then, the bullying may have been reduced but not stopped

completely. Because aggressors do not want to get caught, bullying often takes place at recess, in the lunchroom or in the hallway where there is a high student to teacher ratio and supervision is usually poor (Marano, 1995).

Bullying prevalence is a difficult statistic to pin down, precisely because it is so hard to monitor. Also, many adults hold the, "kids will be kids" attitude, so not all confrontations are seen as bullying. Marano (1995) asserts that at any one time in the United States "from 15 to 20 percent of children are involved in bullying" as either bullies or victims (p. 56). Marano also states, "the vast majority of children (60 to 70%) are never involved in bullying, either as perpetrators or as victims. Early in development, most children acquire internal restraints against such behavior. But those who bully do it consistently" (p. 55). In the first months of the school year when the students do not know each other very well, up to 22% of children report a moderate to severe incidence of victimization. Closer to the end of the year, only about 8% of students are the victims consistently (Marano, 1995). It is these 8% who are the victims for the rest of their academic career through high school. This selection process begins in elementary or middle school and continues on through high school. In elementary school, bullies are less selective, they tend to pick on anyone who crosses their path, it is when they get older that they focus on someone in particular (Marano, 1995).

There is an academic consequence to bullying as well: in schools where there is a high incidence of bullying, students tend to feel less safe and less satisfied with their schoolwork (Marano, 1995). It was often dropping grades and reluctance to go to school that alerted parents and teachers that there might be something happening to the student at school. Previously, when a student was brought to the attention of the school

administration as being a victim of bullying, he/she was usually told one of two things: "just ignore it," or "learn to stick up for yourself" (Bear & Manning, 2002). There was a pervasive attitude of "blame the victim" and students were given self-esteem boosting activities to hopefully deter bullies in the future, such as encouragement to enroll in extracurricular sports or clubs. Possibly the bully was called in to apologize and made to promise that it would not happen again and they were both sent back to class (Bear & Manning, 2002). Each incident was dealt with as an individual occurrence and not as part of the school culture.

*Bully Prevention History*

Gradually there came a national shift in the perception of whose responsibility it was to prevent bullying. This shift in national awareness came to a head in the mid 1990's when the frightening implications of the Jonesboro and Columbine school shootings became public knowledge. It was found that these shootings, as well as some other incidents with lethal consequences, were perpetrated by students others saw as outcasts or "losers" (Marano, 1995). In the aftermath, the shooters themselves or others who knew them said that they had wanted to get back at the people who had harassed and abused them for years (Marano, 1995). Bullying abruptly became a school district's responsibility instead of a single family's, and school safety became a household topic. Any knowledge about preventing violence was examined, and in an effort to send a message that bullying and aggression in schools was not going to be tolerated, the Zero Tolerance movement swept the nation.

*The Zero Tolerance movement.* In a poll taken in 1998 when school shootings peaked in this country, 60-80% of Americans felt that it was likely or very likely that a

school shooting would happen in their community and school safety was rated as the greatest concern among parents with school aged children (Bear & Manning, 2002). As a result of this very understandable fear, the methods used to "treat" aggressors in the United States usually swung from harsh punitive measures to isolation in a movement known as *zero tolerance*. Until bully prevention was regarded as a legitimate attempt to lower rates of school violence the focus was on stopping the aggressive behavior by any means necessary. The victim him/herself was rarely targeted for follow-up; it was assumed that if the behavior stopped, there was no victim.

Zero tolerance has recently come under fire as an inappropriate and ineffective method to discourage bullying and school-related violence. Zero tolerance policies were first applied toward gun violence and drugs on school property. It was this application to weapons that bled to other areas of controlling violence in schools (Bear & Manning, 2002).

The zero tolerance movement in the schools was based on three erroneous assumptions: (a) Aggression and violence in schools have increased markedly in recent years, (b) suspension, expulsion and increased security measures are the most effective strategies for reducing aggression and violence; and (c) knowledge of the harsh zero tolerance consequences will deter aggressive or threatening behavior (Bear & Manning, 2002).

The first assumption was based on the rash of school shootings that took place around the country in the mid to late 1990's. As stated above, school safety was the primary concern among parents of school-aged children. It seemed that each case of violence in the schools was nationally publicized, and the nation was becoming

convinced that their schools were breeding grounds for crazed gunmen. In fact, incidents of school ground violence had been steadily *decreasing* since 1993, before zero tolerance was applied in schools (Bear & Manning, 2002). The zero tolerance advocates cited statistics that seemed to uphold the position that the initiative was an effective one, saying that violent incidents are decreasing. They were correct, though it should not have been attributed to zero tolerance guidelines alone. The emphasis on expulsion of violators only moved the problem out of the school and into the wide world (Bear & Manning, 2002).

The highly publicized outbursts of lethal aggression raised an outcry to, "keep our kids safe in school." Since zero tolerance had already been applied to weapons control, the focus shifted toward keeping weapons out of school. This lead to the second assumption: that an emphasis on security measures and expulsion for violators would eliminate the perceived threat (Bear & Manning, 2002). The harsh guidelines formulated for violation of the second assumption were implemented with the expectation that the policy would deter students from re-offending and would have an enduring effect on student behavior. However, some research shows that such punishment (e.g., expulsion, locker searches, juvenile court charges) fail to promote the development of self-discipline, responsibility, or autonomy (Bear & Manning, 2002). It is also likely to damage the teacher-student relationship in addition to allowing the student to escape a challenging situation (e.g., difficult coursework, peer rejection, poor relationship with teacher) by actively seeking expulsion, thus negatively reinforcing disruptive behavior (Bear & Manning, 2002).

The third assumption of this policy relies on the belief that knowledge of consequences will deter an offender. Research shows that a greater concern for imminent consequences between both genders was associated with *fewer* productive social skills, *less* pro-social behavior, and *lower* social acceptance (Bear & Manning, 2002). In contrast, greater concern for *psychological* consequences in which students expressed awareness of the results of their behavior on others (e.g., I would hurt her feelings) was associated with greater social skills and fewer problem behaviors (Bear & Manning, 2002).

Zero tolerance is a tempting approach to take, because it not only eliminates the threat by expelling the offending student, it quickly and harshly punishes them for violating the rules - consequences that are visible and immediate. By concentrating only on methods to deter violence physically (e.g., locker searches, expulsion, detention, etc.) the mental and emotional reasons for acting out are effectively ignored. Though zero tolerance may seem successful in the short term, to the school, possible long-term consequences to the student are disregarded and minimized. When students are not *taught* that their actions have lasting and tangible results, they will commit the same offense over and over again, without any real knowledge of the implications of their actions (Bear & Manning, 2002). This argues strongly for including a moral reasoning component when working with school-based bullies and offenders. Many programs discussed later in the paper emphasize this important element.

*The Many Forms of Intimidation*

Bullying comes in many forms but the most prevalent in schools are verbal bullying and physical bullying. Verbal bullying takes place when the victim and the

aggressor do not touch but the victim is called names and verbally harassed (Marano, 1995). Physical bullying occurs when there is physical contact made and the victim is hit, slapped, punched, kicked or in any other way physically attacked (Marano, 1995). Physical aggression is the most obvious and usually the most actively punished form of bullying. Verbal bullying can also be split into two categories. There is the aforementioned manner in which victims' health and safety are verbally threatened and they are in real fear for themselves. The other form is teasing, in which "just joking around" could be interpreted many ways. Its ambiguous approach leaves a great deal of room for miscommunication from both the aggressor and the target, often paving the way for hurt and embarrassment. It has been found that both boys and girls do this, though with different emphasis. Girls tend to focus on externally visible attributes like clothes, hairstyle, weight, body structure, etc. (Leff et al., 2001). Boys tend to focus on internal attributes such as mental capacity, affinity for sports, athleticism, and academic performance (Leff et al., 2001).

Recent research introduces differences in the way students can bully or threaten. For example, researchers have found that girls are much more manipulative of peer relationships in a form of aggression termed *relational aggression* (Leff et al., 2001). This form of verbal bullying includes gossiping, excluding others from group events, and withholding or withdrawing friendships (Leff et al., 2001). While this type of aggression may not seem as overtly dangerous as physical aggression, relational aggression has been linked to peer relationship problems, social cognitive processing deficits, and internalized anger (Leff et al., 2001).

Boys, however, are much more likely to use physical dominance when threatening others. This is known as *overt aggression* and is characterized by any physical contact or verbal threat of violence (Leff et al., 2001).

*Psychological Effects of Different Types of Bullying*

Certainly overt aggression is a frightening and intimidating way of bullying, but the long-term effects of taunting, ridicule, and degrading remarks are just now coming to the forefront of research. "Because ridicule is a direct attack on a child's self-worth, it can be life-altering if it persists" (Brendtro, 2001, p.50). What is disturbing about this statement is that many adults underestimate the damage that can be done by verbal taunting and ridicule. Many times the advice from teachers and parents is to, "just ignore it." Research now suggests that this is not a tactic children are satisfied with and that ignoring the teaser does not always make him/her go away (Landau et al., 2001).

What is so difficult about the condition of teasing is that it is such an ambiguous approach. With the open hostility seen in overt physical threatening or bullying there is no mistaking the intention of the aggressor. With the condition of teasing, taunting, and ridicule, intent and interpretation play a large part. The intent of the instigator could in fact not be to hurt the receiver, but to just share a joke. The interpretation of the receiver could be that this student has made hurtful remarks in the past and there is no reason to think differently. Adults often have a much different and broader view of students, and prior knowledge of both parties also comes into play (Landau et al., 2001).

*The Challenge to Teachers*

Differentiating between true ridicule and perhaps an overly sensitive student presents a strain on teachers who are asked to officiate and investigate complaints of

teasing. When one child complains constantly that he/she is getting teased over and over again, it becomes a tiresome issue for faculty, and it is at that point where the advice to "just ignore it" comes into play (Landau et al., 2001).

Recent research seems to indicate that in fact students and teachers perceive and interpret effects of verbal bullying differently. In an effort to see how hurt or angry teachers *thought* students became when teased, Landau, Milich, Harris, and Larson (2001) studied how sensitive preservice teachers were to the impact of teasing on children. *Preservice teachers* are defined as teachers who have not entered the field of teaching yet, and are currently in school to obtain their teaching endorsement.

The study was undertaken with the belief that many teachers are not ascribing enough importance to the condition of being teased (Landau et al., 2001). As stated above, teasing can carry life-long consequences; it can be emotionally demoralizing to face ridicule day after day in a school environment. Children spend the majority of their time in school, surrounded by adults who assumingly want the best for them. If the adults in that environment do not take the results and implications of teasing seriously, the students do not have many other avenues for help (Landau et al., 2001). In this study, the teachers were asked to *predict* how the students would respond, rather than how they themselves would respond if faced with that situation. In this way, it is different from previous research by attempting to assess how accurate teachers are in interpreting student distress (Landau et al., 2001).

The participants included 86 boys and 98 girls from four different elementary schools. There were 82 regular education preservice majors, and 76 special education preservice majors (Landau et al., 2001). The preservice teachers were shown one of six

videotapes consisting of either male or female child actors depicting one of three reactions to being teased about repeating the third grade due to a recent move from another state. The three reactions included an *Ignore* condition, in which the recipient of the taunting ignored the instigator by crossing his/her arms and saying nothing. A *Humorous* condition in which the victim replied with a joke (e.g., "Oh yeah? I just got the chance to learn stuff twice as well as you"), and a *Hostile* condition in which the victim replied with an angry or hurtful remark (Landau et al., 2001).

The 184 students were randomly assigned to one of three teasing conditions (Hostile, Ignore, or Humorous) and were given the corresponding videotape to watch (Landau et al., 2001). Following the videotapes, both groups of participants (teachers and students) were asked to complete an 11-item questionnaire asking for their impressions of the interactions they had just witnessed.

In both participating groups, preservice teachers and students, victims who responded with the Hostile condition were interpreted correctly as being angry. When the victim responded with either the Humorous or Ignore condition, the students projected the victim as feeling more anger than the preservice teachers rated the student as feeling. Both groups of participants agreed that the victim in the Hostile condition did not do the appropriate thing to stop the teasing (Landau et al., 2001).

Overall, the results showed that preservice teachers predicted that the students would rate both the victim and the teaser more positively than they actually did, and the preservice teachers *over*estimated how the children would rate the effectiveness of the victim's response. Interestingly, preservice teachers overestimated how hurtful the

teasing was to the victim, but significantly *under*estimated how angry the students would rate the victim (Landau et al., 2001).

The results may suggest that teachers are not as attuned to the consequences of getting teased as perhaps they thought they were, and that teasing among peers should be taken seriously. Though perceptions may differ in regards to hurtful consequences, the opportunity to investigate the situation should not be passed over. Landau et al. (2001) suggest to school administrators that teasing should be recognized as the subset of bullying that it is, and to be as aggressive at identifying and dealing with perpetrators as they are with physically violent students.

The implications of the study address the need for teachers to be cognizant of how upsetting it is for a child to be teased. When adults fail to validate how the victims of teasing or ridicule feel, it can create long-lasting negative emotional consequences and could discourage further communication between child and adult (Landau et al., 2001). The indication that teachers and adults fail to appreciate how angry children can become as a result of being teased could explain why schools have not moved more aggressively to prevent the verbal harassment that is so prevalent in schools today (Landau et al., 2001).

Verbal harassment, taunting, and ridicule are all viewed as subsets of bullying. As logical as this may seem, these conditions are not usually seen as problems severe enough to be addressed as part of a prevention program (Landau et al., 2001). Many programs that will be focused on later in this paper do not address verbal bullying, and those that do often have other flaws that make them unsuitable for school-based application.

*The RCCP Prevention Initiative*

School bullying began to attract serious attention first in Sweden over 30 years ago. Dan Olweus studied the "science of bullying" and concluded that the *bystanders* of bullying, those that are not directly involved, give tacit approval to the bully and his/her behavior. Though incidents of aggression and bullying have always raised concern, with parents if not always with schools, it was not until the 1980's before an organized, concentrated effort was made to coordinate a program that would address these concerns here in the United States. Olweus had been researching bullies and their impact on other students since the 1970's and was generating a lot of interest in the Scandinavian countries, particularly Norway and Sweden. By the late 1970's he had raised national concern in Sweden and the entire country was making a determined effort to discourage bullying.

Following in his footsteps, the United States became concerned by rising incidents of school violence, and several prominent school districts began looking for programs to address this issue. Prior to the awareness that Olweus generated, incidents of bullying were looked at as isolated events and were dealt with individually. Though some district-wide programs were being implemented to raise awareness of victims' rights, there were no programs to specifically target violence and bully prevention. This void began to diminish in New York, with the help of a few determined and dedicated individuals (Lantieri & Patti, 1996).

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) had its beginnings in Brooklyn, New York, at the District 15 monthly board meeting in 1985. Named the Model Peace Education Program initially, RCCP founders Roderick and Lantieri used

information from Children's Creative Response to Conflict program (CCRC) and the work of William Kreidler, Boston's ESR representative, to compile a curriculum that focused on conflict resolution (Lantieri & Patti, 1996).

For two years RCCP stayed in District 15 and made progress in conflict resolution skills with the three elementary schools in District 15 that had adopted the program. In December of 1987, an article was written on the topic of children and violence in the contemporary issues section of *Educational Leadership* magazine, detailing the efforts of those in New York City. As a result, national attention about violence prevention was focused on RCCP and what it had been able to accomplish in New York City (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). One of the first inquiries on expanding RCCP to other states came from Anchorage, Alaska. Once RCCP had been established successfully in an environment as distant from urban New York City as possible, further support was gained for the adaptability of the initiative (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). After Anchorage, Alaska, several other major American school districts in different states implemented the program, including the New Orleans Public School district, the Vista Unified School District in Southern California, the South Orange-Maplewood School District in New Jersey, and shortly after, the Atlanta Public Schools (Lantieri & Patti, 1996).

In 1985, an independent research team called Metis Associates found that teacher ratings of RCCP indicated significant rises in emotional control in students, pro-social behavior and academic achievement (Brendtro, 2001). In 1980's, self-esteem measures were the only instruments used to evaluate conflict resolution skills. Roderick and Lantieri challenged Metis to produce an instrument that incorporated both cognitive and attitudinal measures (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). When released in 1988 and 1990, the Metis

results revealed that, "71% (of teachers) reported moderate or great decreases in physical violence in the classroom, while 66% observed less name-calling and fewer verbal put-downs" (Lantieri & Patti, 1996, p.208). Eighty-four percent of teachers reported that their listening skills had improved, and that they had applied their increased knowledge of conflict resolution techniques in other areas of their lives. (Lantieri & Patti, 1996).

RCCP grew in popularity. It did so at a time when America was experiencing a drastic surge in violent school-related incidents. RCCP was in demand, yet it was still being molded into a program that could be expanded to other school districts at the lowest possible cost and still maintain effective results. The RCCP program was, and is, labor-intensive and needs a generous amount of classroom and district-wide support, both financially and socially (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). If the necessary support becomes unavailable, the fundamental groundwork of RCCP is incomplete, and the program does not accomplish the violence awareness goals it was meant for (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). Therefore it was, and is, not a program that can be implemented on a wide scale and still be expected to fulfill all the desired objectives.

As RCCP became more widely known, the program was expanded and adapted to work in the high schools, beginning with the alternative schools first. Further evidence of RCCP's commitment to prevention is evidenced by the evaluation that was undertaken during the 1994-1995 and 1995-1996 school years (Cohen, 1999). Using a sample of over 8,000 students in 15 elementary schools, RCCP launched the largest evaluation that had been done to date on any violence prevention program (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). Funded by the Federal Centers for Disease Control and other private foundations, the study had three components. These components included a short-term longitudinal

process and an outcome study of the impact of RCCP on the student sample, a management information system that tracked the program implementation in the schools, and in-depth teacher interviews with a subset of the participating sample schools (Cohen, 1999).

Though previous research had found that children grow more aggressive over time, the researchers found that children in this study who were in RCCP-based classrooms showed a significant positive impact in their development (Cohen, 1999). Using age-appropriate surveys administered to the children, the researchers found that the students in these classrooms had significantly lower hostile attributional biases compared to their peers who were in classrooms with little or no RCCP lessons (Cohen, 1999). Also, it was found that children exposed to little or no RCCP lessons had significantly lower aggressive conflict resolution strategies than their peers (Cohen, 1999).

On of the main components that make RCCP so effective is a comprehensive approach, in which many resources are tapped in a collaborative effort to provide services to teachers and parents (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). RCCP also asks for a long-term commitment (five years or more) from any school system that applies for the program, so it is not a "quick fix." This commitment starts at the school district level.

The creators of RCCP have given much thought to implementation of their violence prevention initiative. The program is integrated as part of the school's curriculum, and becomes incorporated into the school's culture as a permanent part of the environment. Diversity issues, prosocial skills, and conflict resolution are all areas integrated into classroom curriculum that RCCP seeks to intertwine into the school's culture (Lantieri & Patti, 1996).

During the 1996-1997 school year, Metis Associates conducted an evaluation of RCCP in the Atlanta schools, using three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school (Cohen, 1999). Results were gathered after two years of implementation and presented encouraging statistics: 64% of teachers reported less physical violence in the classroom, while 75% of teachers reported an increase in willingness to cooperate in the classroom (Cohen, 1999). When polled, 92% of the students reported that they felt better about themselves, and over 90% of the parents of participating students reported an increase in their own communication and problem-solving skills (Cohen, 1999). In the middle school, in- and out-of-school suspension rates dropped significantly in comparison with non-participating schools that reported an increase in suspensions during the same period (Cohen, 1999). In the high school that implemented RCCP, it was found that the dropout rate decreased significantly during this time period as compared to non-RCCP schools who experienced a surge in drop-out rates during the same time period (Cohen, 1999).

Though RCCP has been found to be successful in reducing aggression in children and incidents of bullying decreased in the schools that implemented RCCP, its time intensive approach combined with its need for monetary resources within the district make it an approach that is not suitable for all schools. Thus, the creators of the program assess each school carefully before permitting implementation to ascertain whether or not this is a program that could be helpful and ultimately successful. This could be why it is not in widespread use, though the results are certainly encouraging.

*Review of Current School-Based Prevention Initiatives*

What makes it difficult to assess and implement a comprehensive program is that prevention and awareness programs are still in their infancy. Many programs have not been in practice long enough to concretely assess their effectiveness. Though RCCP has been in place the longest, it is still by no means an established program. Specific conditions must be in place before the program can be implemented and adjustments and provisions are constantly being made in an effort to keep the initiative current with national trends (Cohen, 1999). In addition to being so new, many programs have methodological difficulties that limit their efficacy in schools (Leff et al., 2001). Among these difficulties is not employing a sound research design (i.e., a random assignment, adequate sample size, satisfactory follow-up assessments). Weisz and Hawley (1998) recommend utilizing a multimethod outcome evaluation protocol (as cited in Leff et al., 2001). Moncher and Prinz (1991) emphasize the importance of having procedures in place to assess treatment integrity and acceptability (as cited in Leff et al., 2001).

Also, one of the primary goals of prevention and awareness programs is that it be relatively easy to apply within schools. Currently many programs do not employ manuals structured enough for schools unfamiliar with the curriculum to easily implement initiatives. Instruction materials are not user-friendly and handouts are often contradictory to information in the curriculum manual (Leff et al., 2001). These impediments restrict the use and application of programs that otherwise may have appropriate goals.

A study was conducted in an attempt to narrow the field and assess the effectiveness of some current programs that utilize the recommended elements. Leff,

Power, and Manz of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in conjunction with Costigan of SPSS Inc. in Washington D.C. and Nabors of the University of Cincinnati (2001) employed a three-step process to identify these programs. The first step in this elimination process was an extensive review of the most commonly used programs found in educational, medical, and psychological databases, for example, PsychInfo, Medline, ERIC, ISI and Health Star (Leff et al., 2001).

The second step was the exclusion of programs that did not expressly target school-based aggression prevention, conflict management, or social skills development. Programs that employed peer mediation as their primary initiative were excluded since recent research has questioned the efficacy of such an approach (Leff et al., 2001).

The final step in this process was the exclusion of programs that had a substance abuse component. Programs that target substance abuse generally have an older age range and a different focus than violence awareness or bully prevention programs (Leff et al., 2001).

Once the selection process was complete, 34 prevention and/or intervention programs remained. To proceed with the study, the 34 programs were assessed and labeled *efficacious* (i.e., established/successful) or *possibly efficacious* (i.e., promising but in need of independent replication), using the following criteria:

> (a) An experimental group design including the use of random assignment procedures, (b) a well-documented treatment procedure, (c) uniform therapist training and treatment integrity monitoring procedures, (d) multimethod outcome measures demonstrating adequate reliability and validity, (e) assessment of

effects at follow-up (at least 6-month follow-up), and (f) replication conducted by different investigators (Leff et al., 2001, p. 346).

If a program met all of the preceding criteria, it was determined to be efficacious. If a program did not meet all of the criteria, it was determined to be possibly efficacious. Surprisingly, none of the 34 programs met the criteria for efficacious and only five programs met the criteria for possibly efficacious. The five programs were *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Second Step, First Step to Success, Anger Coping Program,* and *Brain Power Program* (Leff et al., 2001).

The five programs were then divided into three categories: *Universal Prevention* programs, *Selective Prevention* programs, and *Indicated Prevention* programs. Universal prevention programs are programs that are intended for applicability to all students in the school (Leff et al., 2001). Two programs fell into this category: the PATHS program and Second Step. Selective Programs are designed to target and treat children identified as high risk for becoming aggressive (Leff et al., 2001). First Step to Success is the only program reviewed that was identified as Selective. Indicated programs are intervention programs aimed at children already identified with serious aggressive behaviors (Leff et al., 2001). The remaining two programs, the Anger Coping Program and the Brain Power Program were identified as Indicated (Leff et al., 2001).

To obtain a better understanding of these five programs and what components make them possibly efficacious compared to other programs reviewed, they were analyzed across four dimensions. These dimensions provide a brief description, which includes an overview of the program, target participants, and expectations for program facilitators. Also provided is the research design used. Following that is the outcome

evaluation: specifically, treatment effect, follow-up effects and replication efforts. Lastly, a critique is included, discussing the strengths and limitations of each program with focus on the applicability to boys and girls, the ease of generalizability to multiple schools, and appropriateness of outcome measures (Leff et al., 2001).

*The PATHS Program*

The PATHS program is a highly versatile one. Originally intended for use with deaf children, it has been modified and empirically adapted for use with both regular education and special education children (Leff et al., 2001). Aimed at elementary aged children, PATHS is categorized as a Universal Prevention Program. Implemented by teachers, this program uses a classroom-based curriculum (Leff et al., 2001).

PATHS primary goal is to help students develop the problem solving, self-control, and emotional regulation skills needed to function successfully in the academic environment. The Conduct Problem Preventions Research Group (1999) found the program configuration uses 57 lessons of 20- to 30- minute duration taught two to three times a week (as cited in Leff et al., 2001). Using discussion, direct instruction, modeling, and videotapes, the primary initiative skills are taught in the classroom environment (Leff et al., 2001). In order to integrate these skills to the home setting, parent letters and home assignments establish and maintain communication between teachers and parents.

*Research design used to assess effectiveness.* Over 6,500 students from 198 intervention classrooms and 180 matched comparison classrooms participated in a pretest-posttest control group design with random assignment. The Conduct Problem Preventions Research Group (1999) found that all of the students came from schools in

high-risk areas across the United States (as cited in Leff et al., 2001). Outcome measures used teacher reports, peer sociometrics, and classroom observations. All outcome measures had adequate reliability and validity (Leff et al., 2001). Implementation manuals were provided to participating teachers as part of the program. The number of sessions provided and the consistency and quality of treatment implementation were recorded as part of the evaluation (Leff et al., 2001).

*Results found.* Moderate positive effects were found for the participants at the end of the first grade on peer sociometric measures of aggression and of hyperactive-disruptive behaviors. Moderate positive effects were also found on behavioral observations of classroom atmosphere (Leff et al., 2001). The authors of the article wished to study the effect across locations (urban versus rural) and found that there was no significant Intervention X Site interaction effect, leading the authors to believe that the findings were consistent across location, socioeconomic status, and ethnic composition of the classroom (Leff et al., 2001). When teacher ratings of classroom aggression and disruption were studied, however, there was no significant difference between the intervention and control classrooms. It was found that the ratings of teacher quality and consistency of implementation of initiatives was significantly related to teacher reports of decreases in classroom aggression and to improved classroom climate (Leff et al., 2001).

In an interest to find whether PATHS had a significant long-term effect, another study was examined. Greenberg and Kusche (1996) found that one and two-year longitudinal results suggested that PATHS may have lasting effects on emotional

understanding, interpersonal social problem-solving skills, and possibly on teacher ratings of externalizing behaviors (as cited in Leff et al., 2001).

*Strengths and limitations of the PATHS program.* As stated previously, PATHS is a versatile program with multiple applications. The authors of this article found that PATHS is ultimately a utilitarian program with components that are easily integrated as part of a comprehensive school and family based aggression prevention initiative (Leff et al., 2001). Another strength is the strong research design that employed randomization at the classroom level (Leff et al., 2001). This allows researchers to evaluate the treatment quality, integrity and consistency. Lastly, the exceptionally large and diverse population that yielded the sample under investigation directs the authors to infer that PATHS has great potential for children from across socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds as well as urban and rural school settings (Leff et al., 2001).

Some limitations found for PATHS include the settings within a school, for example, playgrounds, lunchroom, and hallways (Leff et al., 2001). We now know that it is these unstructured settings that provide the most cover for aggressors. Though PATHS has shown promise in classroom settings, it is unclear whether these positive effects generalize to other unsupervised areas of the building. Also, investigation results are ambiguous on whether PATHS is equally effective for both genders (Leff et al., 2001).

Although a wide range of validated outcome measures were used, several of these were collected at only posttest, as it was not possible to collect information on sociometrics and classroom behavior at the beginning of the school year (Leff et al., 2001). This should be considered a limitation of the study and not of the program. As a

result of this limitation, further research is recommended before PATHS should be implemented with confidence.

*The Second Step Program*

The Second Step program is a comprehensive social skills program aimed at preschool through middle school aged children. Implemented by teachers, the goal of the program is to teach students empathy, impulse control, and anger management skills (Leff et al., 2001). The Second Step curriculum has a series of developmentally sequenced age groupings: (a) pre-school – kindergarten, (b) first – third grade, (c) fourth – fifth grade, and (d) middle school/junior high (Frey & Sylvester, 1997). The program is structured using photographs and stories about social situations requiring social problem-solving skills, video vignettes to facilitate class discussions, role-plays, modeling, corrective feedback, and contingent positive reinforcement (Frey & Sylvester, 1997). These methods are implemented using 30 classroom lessons, each approximately 35-45 minutes long, usually taught once or twice per week. Second Step instructors provide concentrated one to three day training sessions for the teachers both on-site and regionally (Leff et al., 2001). Recently, a preschool through fifth grade supplemental manual in Spanish and a family guide to assist parents of English Language Learners was created (Leff et al., 2001). This program can be applied to all students in a school and is considered a Universal Prevention Program.

*Research design used to assess effectiveness.* A pretest-posttest design was used with 790 second and third graders from 12 different schools in urban and suburban western Washington State (Frey & Sylvester, 1997). The schools were paired to reflect similar socio-economic and ethnic make-ups. Subjects were randomly assigned to a

Second Step training group or a control group (Frey & Sylvester, 1997). Outcome measures included teacher and parent rating instruments (Leff et al., 2001). Also included were classroom, lunchroom, and playground observations for behavior. Instruction manuals were easily accessible and treatment integrity was monitored. Also, twice during the course of the program, two researchers observed and rated the quality of treatment implementation (Leff et al., 2001).

*Results found.* There was a moderate positive effect found for participants of the Second Step program. Participants were observed to exhibit less physical aggression and more neutral/prosocial behaviors in the lunchroom and on the playground than students who had been in the control group (Leff et al., 2001). In their study, Grossman, Neckerman, Koepsell, Liu, Asher, Beland, Frey, and Rivara (1997) found, "1.11 fewer acts of 'negative physical behavior' per hour per student and 17.1 more acts of 'neutral/prosocial behavior' per hour per student in the lunchroom/playground context" (as cited in Leff et al., 2001, p.351). It was also found through observation that treatment effects were still present after a six-month period. However, no statistically significant differences between experimental and control groups on teacher or parent ratings were reported (Leff et al., 2001). Frey and Sylvester (1997) suggest that this discrepancy can be explained as a lack of opportunity for teachers to observe these behaviors, since most of them took place on the playground. The researchers also hypothesize that school interventions did not generalize to the home setting since in this study, family members were not taught the skills primary to the program.

*Strengths and limitations of the Second Step program.* The strong research design used in the study of second and third graders as well as the meticulous monitoring of

treatment integrity are all strengths that reinforce the positive findings of the study (Leff et al., 2001). The comprehensive and detailed training manual that accompanies the program argues strongly that it is applicable to a wide range of target participants. Further, this program was found to be one of the only initiatives currently in use that demonstrated a decrease in lunchroom and playground aggression, both highly volatile areas of schools. This decrease was present in post-implementation, after one year of participation with the program (Frey & Sylvester, 1997). This decrease was still present at a six-month follow-up (Leff et al., 2001).

One limitation of Second Step is that though behavioral observations have found a decrease in aggression, parent and teacher reports have not concurred with this same decrease (Leff et al., 2001). This suggests that though aggression observed on the playground and in the lunchroom seemed to decrease, in the classroom and at home, aggressive behavior showed no such decrease. This is interesting given that it is not seen in any of the other programs. Essentially it is the opposite of what is usually found (Leff et al., 2001). This could argue that in combination with another program, a more comprehensive approach with greater generalization could be achieved.

A further limitation is that this program is relatively new to the field of aggression prevention and awareness, its effectiveness is still being evaluated for use with preschool through first grade, and for upper elementary and middle school students (Leff et al., 2001). Though this program has definite potential as a classroom-based aggression prevention program, further research should be conducted before it can be implemented with confidence.

*The First Step to Success Program*

First Step to Success is labeled as a Selective Intervention program, designed to identify and target kindergarten students with disruptive and aggressive behaviors (Leff et al., 2001). This intensive classroom- and home-based early identification and intervention program is intended to prevent high-risk children from developing patterns of antisocial behavior (Leff et al., 2001). Therefore, it would not be used by an entire school as an initiative, but rather with specific children in need of these services. There are three essential steps to the program, specifically: (a) Universal screening and early detection, (b) school intervention, and (c) Home-Base parent training (Walker, Severson, Feil, Stiller, & Golly, 1998). The universal screening process ranges from teacher nominations to the use of rank ordering, teacher ratings and direct observation to determine whether their behaviors qualify as high-risk behaviors (Lumsden, 2000). Once identified, an intensive classroom-based intervention designed to target aggressive/disruptive behaviors and increase social skills takes place. This intervention is a modification and extension of Hops and Walker's CLASS Program (Contingencies for Learning Academic and Social Skills) for conduct-disordered children and takes one to two months to complete (Leff et al., 2001). Initially a program consultant works with the students and later the students' classroom teacher assumes responsibility for implementing the initiative (Lumsden, 2000). Using a point system allows the students to earn privileges and special activities.

The third part of this program involves a component focused on improving home-school communication and the parenting skills of the parents of high-risk aggressive children (Leff et al., 2001). This component is called Home-Base and provides parent

training from the program consultant on six critical school-related skills. These components include: (a) Communication and sharing at school, (b) cooperation, (c) limit-setting, (d) problem-solving, (e) friendship-making, (f) developing confidence (Lumsden, 2000). After receiving training, parents teach these skills to their children. This component lasts roughly six weeks.

*Research design used to assess effectiveness.* In one recent reevaluation of the program by Walker et al. (1998), an experimental design with a wait-list control group and randomly assigned subjects to treatment groups took place.

To conduct the study, a total of 46 high-risk kindergarteners were randomly assigned to the First Step intervention ($n = 24$) or to a wait-list control group ($n = 22$) that received treatment following the study's active phase (Leff et al., 2001). The First Step intervention group was studied up to and through grades one and two. The wait-list group was followed through grade one (Walker et al., 1998). A limitation of this study is that participants were primarily male, non-minority, and from middle-class, middle-income families (Leff et al., 2001).

Methods evaluating the outcome results of participation included teacher ratings of adaptive, maladaptive, aggressive, and withdrawn behavior. Classroom behavioral observations were also used (Leff et al., 2001). A consultant was employed to maintain treatment integrity with daily record forms, a critical events log, and regular meetings with the program coordinators (Leff et al., 2001).

*Results found.* Recent investigations have found that First Step decreases aggressive and maladaptive behaviors according to teacher ratings. Also, according to Golly, Stiller, and Walker (1998), teacher ratings recorded increases in adaptive behavior

and classroom observations of on-task behavior (as cited in Leff et al., 2001). However, teacher ratings of withdrawn behavior did not change as a result of the intervention (Leff et al., 2001).

Though the study included primarily males, the pattern of results found suggests that First Step is equally efficacious for high-risk children of both genders (Leff et al., 2001). In addition the longitudinal study by Walker et al. (1998) found that all significant treatment effects were maintained at the one and two year mark. The results from the study were found in the absence of a cohort control group that, had one been in place, ideally would have controlled for outside effects of time, setting and other factors due to the wait-list control group factor (Leff et al., 2001).

The investigation by Golly et al. (1998) was initiated to ascertain the social acceptability of the program (as cited in Leff et al., 2001). There were two primary views. One faction felt the program to be user-friendly with effective goals and adequate training, while the other group felt the program to be too intense for children with any but the most severe behavior problems. It was also felt that the program was expensive and difficult to maintain (Leff et al., 2001).

*Strengths and limitations of First Step to Success.* Much of what makes the First Step Program a reliable one is the strong research design used in previous research. In addition, the well-documented and well-validated multi-components of the intervention also provide support for First Step (Leff et al., 2001). Also, the social evaluation component to recent research provides information to administrations and support personnel in determining whether First Step would be an ideal approach for their particular school.

There are only two troubling limitations to First Step. The first is that the current research is incomplete across several important variables such as parent report measures and behavioral observations on the playground, lunchroom and other poorly supervised areas of school grounds (Leff et al., 2001). The most common complaint heard from implementers of First Step is the lack of parent consistency, and an absence of follow-through measures (Walker et al., 1998). The second limitation is that there needs to be more diversity in the research samples. An urban component, with racial diversity should be assessed before implementing this program with confidence in schools with a different makeup than where previous research has taken place (Leff et al., 2001).

Though one of the main complaints about the program was its intensity, it does show promise as a successful identification and treatment tool for exceptionally high-risk students (Leff et al., 2001). Though, the creators of First Step caution that it does not seem as effective with autistic students, students with severe language difficulties, or students who live in chaotic homes and are in need of massive supports to function at the basic survival level (Walker et al., 1998). As stated above, parent support and cooperation is an essential element of the program.

*The Anger Coping Program*

The Anger Coping Program is an Indicated Intervention program, where the primary goal is to intercept boys who have already been identified as having severe behavioral difficulties and to help them become aware of their maladaptive patterns (Leff et al., 2001). The Anger Coping Program has its beginnings in a social-cognitive model, where emphasis is placed on information processing and management (Lochman, Dunn, & Dougan, 1993). The information taken in by the boys is examined and adaptive

strategies for social interaction and conflict resolution are presented.

In addition to the goal of intercepting maladaptive thought processes are the objectives of teaching boys to understand and identify their anger, increasing their problem-solving skills, and improving their social interaction skills (Lochman et al., 1993). Using a small-group format, an intervention takes place that is led by a mental health professional and a school employee, for example, a guidance counselor (Leff et al., 2001).

The intervention takes place over an 18-week period, with one session per week. The sessions usually last 60 minutes with groups of four to six boys identified as being highly aggressive from peer and teacher reports (Leff et al., 2001). Group leaders are two adults, one identified with the school (i.e. counselor, school psychologist) and one associated with a local mental health facility, usually social work staff, a psychiatrist, or a psychologist (Lochman et al., 1993). Traditionally the Anger Coping Program has been used with boys, aged 8 to 14, but recently modifications have been made for use with boys aged 5 to 7, and for older adolescent boys (Leff et al., 2001).

This comprehensive program comes with a treatment protocol and accompanying video. Among the topics covered are goal setting, perspective taking, social problem-solving, awareness of physiological arousal, self-instruction techniques, and generating alternatives to conflict situations (Leff et al., 2001). Role-plays are used extensively in an effort to arouse the participants' emotional state, whereupon they are instructed in how to cope with their potentially destructive emotions (Leff et al., 2001).

*Research design used to assess effectiveness.* This program has been extensively researched, as it has a potential application in juvenile homes and adolescent centers.

Two different studies, one by Lochman and Curry (1986) and another by Lochman, Lampron, Gemmer, Harris, and Wyckoff (1989) employed a pretest-posttest control group design, with random assignment of aggressive boys to the Anger Coping program ($n = 31$) and a minimal/no treatment intervention ($n = 52$) (as cited in Lochman, 1992). These two groups were then compared to a non-aggressive control group ($n = 62$). The 31 Anger Coping Program subjects had been rated by teachers in the fourth, fifth and sixth grade as aggressive and disruptive. The 52 subjects in the no treatment group were identified in the same way. The 62 non-aggressive subjects were identified as aggressive by less than 7% of their male peers (Lochman, 1992). Also, the Anger Coping group was divided further into two groups. One group received a booster intervention, and the other group participated in the Anger Coping program only, with no intervention (Lochman, 1992).

These studies have examined a wide range of treatment effects across a wide range of variables, including classroom observation, self-report measures of problem-solving skills, self-esteem and social competence (Leff et al., 2001). Parent and teacher ratings were also used. In Lochman and Curry's study, treatment integrity was monitored by having the group leaders complete questionnaires relating to observance and maintenance of session outlines, and by having project personnel monitor treatment sessions (as cited in Leff et al., 2001). Consistent implementation is always of concern when there are no program-trained personnel on staff, but in these research studies, it was maintained by adhering to the treatment manual and videotape (Leff et al., 2001).

*Results found.* Both of the previous studies and one additional study by Lochman, Burch, Curry, and Lampron (1984) with this initiative have shown that it can decrease

disruptive and aggressive behaviors as rated by independent classroom observations, decrease violent behaviors at home, as rated by parents, and increase reported self-esteem by student accounts (as cited in Leff et al., 2001). The Anger Coping booster group had lower rates of passive off-task behavior than the Anger Coping only group did, as well as significantly lower passive off-task behavior rates than the no-treatment group (Lochman, 1992). Despite these encouraging findings, it was shown that there was no significant decrease in aggressive behaviors as rated by peer and teacher reports.

When a follow-up study by Lochman in 1992 was conducted at the three-year mark, it was discovered that participants in the study had lower substance abuse problems, more competent social problem-solving skills, and higher self-confidence, especially home-related self confidence, than children who had not participated in the program. Though this was the case, the participants did not display less delinquent behavior than control group children at follow-up, and no effect was found for overall classroom behavior (Lochman, 1992).

*Strengths and limitations of the Anger Coping Program.* Among the strengths of the program are the detailed treatment protocol and videotape. This detailing assists accurate replication and dissemination (Leff et al., 2001). The heavy emphasis on role-playing is an aspect unique to this program and provides an opportunity to practice social conflict skills in a setting designed to promote generalizability. An additional strength of the program is that it may have a beneficial effect on substance abuse. Lochman's 1992 follow-up study found long-term treatment effects still in place. The increase in self-confidence ratings also found in the follow-up study is encouraging since self-confidence ratings appear to predict and moderate other outcomes such as decision making abilities,

and may have an impact on substance abuse outcomes (Lochman, 1992). Lastly, the replicated findings in each of the research studies allow for confidence in the results (Leff et al., 2001).

There is one large limitation and several smaller ones with the Anger Coping Program. The largest is that the program has been implemented almost entirely with boys. There is little to no information on how effective this program would be with girls (Leff et al., 2001). Another limitation is how little data there is on the carry-over effects to lunchroom or playground situations. Also, the treatment integrity measures were not as specific as they could have been to ensure accurate replication of the program (Leff et al., 2001). Greater specificity would have been appropriate. The new addition of the parent component may increase efficacy across variables, but that has yet to be studied (Leff et al., 2001).

*The Brain Power Program*

The Brain Power Program also falls under the Indicated Interventions umbrella. The target audiences for this program are boys who have been identified as high-risk by peer and teacher reports. The Brain Power program uses small-group intervention directed by school staff members who have extensive prior experience with aggressive youth and small-group dynamics (Leff et al., 2001). The goal of this program is a bit different than those discussed previously. Several studies by Hudley, Britsch, Wakefield, Smith, Demorat, and Cho (1998), Hudley and Friday (1996) and Hudley and Graham (1993) reported the objective is to reduce the tendency of aggressive boys to infer hostile attributions in negative-outcome social situations from their peers, as well as reduce reactive aggression toward peers in socially ambiguous circumstances (as cited in Leff et

al., 2001). Essentially, the Brain Power Program is an attribution retraining focused initiative, aimed at reducing negative attributions in social situations.

Using this small-group format, 12 sessions are held twice per week with six participants in grades three to six. This program has specific group composition requirements. Four of the participants are boys who have been identified by peer and teacher nominations as being aggressive and disliked. The other two participants are boys identified as non-aggressive role models (Leff et al., 2001). The sessions are structured using videotaped segments, role-playing, and discussions to help students learn how to make more accurate attributions in potential social conflict situations (Leff et al., 2001). In the Hudley and Graham study (1993), as well as the later studies the participants of Brain Power Program were predominantly African-American or Hispanic boys in the third through sixth grade from lower middle-class families or were public welfare recipients (as cited in Leff et al., 2001).

*Research design used to assess effectiveness.* In the Hudley and Friday study (1996) a pretest-posttest control group design was used consisting of randomly assigned aggressive and non-aggressive children to one of three treatment groups: the attributional intervention ($n = 96$ aggressive and 48 non-aggressive), an attention training control group ($n = 96$ aggressive and 48 non-aggressive), and a no-treatment control group ($n = 64$ aggressive and 32 non-aggressive; as cited in Hudley et al., 1998). The entirely African-American/Latino male subjects ($n = 256$) were identified as aggressive if scores fell above the median on the teacher ratings of aggression, below the median on social preference scores, and at or above the 70$^{th}$ percentile on peer nominations of aggressive behavior (Hudley et al., 1998).

Treatment outcomes were evaluated using the attributions that children assigned on an analogue task and a series of pencil and paper hypothetical vignettes (Leff et al., 2001). Also used were teacher ratings of behavior and social skills and an examination of school disciplinary record (Leff et al., 2001). These evaluation data were collected at pretreatment, post-treatment, and at six-month intervals following treatment. Treatment integrity was maintained and monitored through observation of treatment sessions and weekly team meetings (Leff et al., 2001).

*Results found.* Teacher reports demonstrated that the Brain Power Program has successfully lessened the tendency of aggressive boys to make hostile attributional decisions in hypothetical simulations of ambiguous provocation (Leff et al., 2001). Also according to teacher reports, the program has also shown success in reducing aggressive boys' overall level of aggression (Leff et al., 2001). Though success was shown by teacher reports, there was no change in documented referrals for discipline and/or self-reported anger in hypothetical social conflict situations (Leff et al., 2001). Though the objective of the program is intended for aggressive children only, results from the previous studies show that the non-aggressive children who participated experienced no adverse effects by participating in the group intervention. Follow-up data indicated that most of the significant findings had diminished by 12 months (Leff et al., 2001).

*Strengths and limitations of the Brain Power Program.* There are several unique strengths to this particular program, among them that the treatment effects are evaluated using a methodologically rigorous design (Leff et al., 2001). Another positive aspect is that this program was designed intentionally for underserved minority children, and that the intervention is implemented exclusively by on-site school who are familiar with the

situation. Also, it is notable that significant results were obtained on some measures within a very short treatment period of six weeks (Leff et al., 2001).

Among the greatest limitations of the Brain Power Program is that it has such a narrow target group. Though it is encouraging that such a specifically needy group is targeted, it is still not formatted for implementation with girls or for a wider range of socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Also, most of the positive treatment effects that were found appeared to have diminished by the one-year follow-up mark (Leff et al., 2001). Another troubling limitation is that though positive results were found for the classroom, there were no parts of the program that addressed the attributions found on the playground, in the lunchroom or hallways (Leff et al., 2001). In the 1996 study, the researchers realized that aggressive behavior is subject to multiple determinants. This is supported by the diminished positive treatment effects found at the one-year follow-up (Hudley et al., 1998). Hudley et al. put forth the suggestion that the most successful intervention will be those that combine a theoretical understanding of human behavior and a practical understanding of the best methods for securing and maintaining behavior change. It is recommended by Leff et al. (2001) that further investigation of the effectiveness of the Brain Power Program within the parameters of a broader school-based aggression prevention initiative.

Six programs have been discussed and aspects of each, both positive and negative have been identified. While RCCP has shown that it can reduce incidents of violence, aggression and bullying in the schools, it is a time-intensive program and requires both financial commitment and personal investment by the community and school staff to

ensure reliable implementation. It is these qualities that do not allow it to be a widely used program or useable by every school district.

The five programs discussed following RCCP; the PATHS Program, Second Step, First Step to Success, Anger Coping Program, and the Brain Power Program, all have promising elements and appropriate goals for the populations they are aimed at serving. This is a good start. What is needed now is incorporation of the positive aspects these five programs provide, with a program proven to be successful for both genders as well as situationally (i.e., classroom, lunchroom, hallway) and as reported by teacher, parent, and student reports.

Though all of the previous programs have promising qualities to them, violence prevention and bully awareness programs have much more ground to cover before any one of them can become a comprehensive program, able to initiate best practices for keeping students safe (Leff et al., 2001). In Chapter Three, recommendations for designing a more comprehensive school-based prevention initiative will be discussed.

# Chapter 3

## *Conclusion*

Bullying has a long and complicated history. It crosses ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and gender boundaries. It has long been a concern to the parents of victimized children and often too late the seriousness of the situation is not comprehended until the child has taken a lethal action. The research on bullies is rife with the testimonies of stricken parents whose child has committed suicide as a result of intolerable bullying at school. We now know that Columbine and many other school shootings had their roots in bullying, despite a violence awareness program already in place at Columbine. This fact argues strongly for *effective* bully and violence prevention, using programs that have been empirically tested and found to be successful or efficacious.

With this in mind, the authors of the "*School-Based Aggression Prevention Programs for Young Children: Current Status and Implications for Violence Prevention*" recommend several components that are essential for a comprehensive, efficacious bully prevention program. An explanation of these components follows.

### *Defining Aggression Broadly and Target Multiple Forms of Aggression*

For example, relational aggression, much more common with girls than boys, has rarely been a focus of prevention programs and is just now attracting attention as a serious form of bullying and hostility. Research has shown how damaging it can be, yet often there is little or no time allotted toward addressing this in the curriculum of prevention programs.

*Provide Services Within a Naturalistic Setting*

Previous programs have emphasized interventions held within the classroom, however, aggression on the playground and within the lunchroom or hallways is rarely addressed (Leff et al., 2001). Bullies do not seek to get caught, which means that most incidents of serious bullying take place when adults are not around, or when adults are not paying attention. Getting program results to generalize across settings is one of the most difficult goals of violence and/or bully prevention, since it calls for the instigator and peers to regulate their own behavior. Thus, attempts should be made to modify present programs to make generalization to unstructured settings easier (Leff et al., 2001).

*Evaluate Programs through Empirical Research*

According to Leff et al. (2001), there are several areas that need to be addressed when designing, adapting, or implementing a school-based prevention/awareness program that allows it to be successfully empirically researched. An explanation of these areas follows.

*Treatment integrity.* Treatment integrity (i.e., adherence to program guidelines and standards) needs to be maintained and monitored during implementation of the initiative. Attention needs to be paid to the percentage of observed sessions, who was the observer, whether integrity checklists were used, and how much supervision was provided to program implementers (Leff et al., 2001).

*Use of culturally sensitive, multimethod outcome measures.* A study by Soriano, Soriano, and Jimenez (1994) suggests that aggression prevention programs need to provide a strong rationale for how they are measuring outcome, and how each outcome is

relevant and appropriate for the cultural groups being served (as cited in Leff et al., 2001). Also, programs hoping for a strong representation should utilize multiple outcome measures, for example, behavioral observations, teacher and parent reports, and objective measures related to aggression such as discipline referrals and nursing reports (Leff et al., 2001).

*Providing effect sizes.* It is difficult to find programs that provide information on the magnitude of their significant findings. Effect sizes are crucial to determine how relatively successful a program is in implementing its objectives (Leff et al., 2001).

*Examine longitudinal effects.* Though it is tempting to be excited about positive short-term effects, long-term effects need to be assessed to determine any gains made in the years following treatment (Leff et al., 2001).

*Social validity.* Satisfaction measures are important to collect so schools that implement prevention/awareness programs are aware of how the school staff overall feels about the intervention, and whether it is seen as an appropriate and useful program (Leff et al., 2001).

*Replication.*

> "According to the guidelines outlined by Chambless and Hollon (1998), treatments should be designated 'efficacious' (i.e., established) only when they have been shown to be more effective than a no treatment, a placebo, or an alternate treatment across multiple investigations conducted by different research teams" (Leff et al., 2001, p. 357).

None of the programs researched in this article reached the "efficacious" label, though many show promise.

*A Last Word...*

Any bullying incident that leads a child to fear coming to school is a tragedy. Imagine going to work in the morning and being actually fearful that your personal safety and dignity is going to be assaulted or degraded. People in the work force are given routes through which they can address grievances and distance themselves from uncomfortable situations. Co-workers who are physically intimidating or verbally abusive would never be allowed to continue such behavior, yet it is seen on playgrounds, in hallways, and in the lunchroom in schools all over the nation. It is rare to find a school where bullying is *not* a constant source of concern.

Yet, for all the strong emotions it raises, school violence and bullying incidents have actually decreased in recent years. Statistics from the National School Safety Center showed that between 1993 and 1998 student reports of physical fights on and off school grounds decreased by 14%. A 1999 New York Times/CBS poll of 1,038 teenagers aged 12-17 indicated that the percentage of youths who reported a fear of being victimized inside or outside a school building dropped from 40% to 24% (as cited in Bear & Manning, 2002). In addition, 87% of teenagers polled thought their schools were safe (Bear & Manning, 2002). The Indicators of School Crime and Safety report for 2000 showed that students felt more, rather than less, safe. Students aged 12 to 18 who initially reported a fear of being attacked or harmed at school decreased between 1995 and 1999 from 9% to 5% (as cited in Bear & Manning, 2002). The same decrease was reported for students who said they avoided one or more places at school out of fear for personal safety.

What does this tell us? Nationally, our schools *are* becoming safer. Students are more comfortable at school than they have been in a long time. The national trend is encouraging, but for many students who still fear getting on the bus in the morning, national trends do not apply. It is these students who slip through the cracks. Now that bullying is on a downward trend, prevention initiatives need to be honed, developed, and implemented with conviction. The fact that prevention is being so aggressively pursued, if not in the most organized fashion, indicates that victimized children do have a voice, and a way out. They just need a little encouragement to use them.

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