Introduction

Bullying and Bystanderism

IF WE DO WHAT WE'VE ALWAYS DONE, WE'LL GET WHAT WE'VE ALWAYS GOTTEN

Bullying has been an acknowledged problem in schools for decades, and for just as long educators have been trying to find solutions. Schools have spent a great deal of time and money on various antibullying programs and, more recently, character education in an attempt to stop bullying behavior. Despite our best efforts, however, bullying continues to be a global dilemma. The statistics are consistent and tell the same story in country after country, school after school. Bullying exists and is a daily occurrence for many of our students.

- Research conducted in Canada, Europe, and the United States has shown that roughly 10 to 15 percent of students aged 11 to 15 admitted being involved in weekly physical bullying (Craig & Harel, 2004; Duncan, 1999; Sourander, Helstela, Helenius, & Piha, 2000).
- Bullying is a common problem worldwide affecting one in five school-aged children. The proportion of school-aged children who report being bullied is consistent across countries: Australia (17%), England (19%), Japan (15%), Norway (14%), Spain (17%), and United States (16%; Weir, 2001).
- A survey was administered to 4,763 Canadian children in Grades 1 to 8, and 6 percent admitted bullying others, 15 percent reported being victimized, and 2 percent reported being both bullies and victims (Pepler & Craig, 1997).
- Every month, 13 percent of Canadian students report being victims of electronic bullying or of electronically bullying others (Canadian Public Health Association, 2004).

- One in ten teenagers is a victim of cyber bullying in the United Kingdom (MSN, 2006).
- Thirty-nine percent of middle schoolers and 36 percent of high schoolers say they don't feel safe at schools (Josephson Institute, 2001).

Despite all of the programs and lessons, the problem has not disappeared. In fact, bullying has evolved in ways that were not even imagined 40 years ago when Dan Olweus, a Norwegian researcher who is commonly known as the grandfather of the antibullying initiative, started his investigations. Bullying is evolving with a Darwinistic perseverance to thrive. The classic schoolyard bully who takes your lunch money is now almost a welcome and easily dealt with problem. The new breeds of bully that have evolved are nearly invisible, as the anonymity of computers allows cyber bullying to be imperceptible.

When we talk about bullying in schools, it is very comfortable to discuss the actions of the students. As educators, we use the terms *bully* and *victim* with a fair degree of ease. For the past 30 years, the word *bullying* has been part of the common vernacular of teaching. Dan Olweus developed the first formal definition of *bullying* in the 1970s. His extensive work over the past four decades has allowed his definition to evolve to characterize bullying as intentional, repeated, hurtful acts, words, or other behavior, such as name-calling, threatening, and/or shunning, committed by one or more children against another child (Olweus, 2001).

Students often self-identify as both the bullied and the bully (Nansel et al., 2004) making intervention difficult from a third party perspective. In 1978 Olweus began to define bullying and described three types of bully: the aggressive bully, the passive bully, and the bully-victim. Stephenson and Smith (1989) also identified three types of bullies: physical, verbal, and emotional. The concept of bullying has evolved to now include nine subcategories of bullying: physical, verbal, social or relational, reactive-victim, cyber or electronic, gender-based, racial or ethnocultural, sexual, and religious, as well as multiple types of victims generally categorized as passive and aggressive (see Resource C for definitions). In all cases, the actions of the bully are purposeful and intended to hurt or upset the victim.

While all forms of bullying have the same end goal, they are very different in their approaches and therefore in their observability. A hit, trip, or punch is easy to see, while the subtleties of social bullying, such as a raised eyebrow or a quiet whisper, are relatively inconspicuous. Verbal and social bullying are the most difficult to stop, as they are the most challenging for educational professionals to observe (Macklem, 2003). They can occur in as little as seven seconds, and social bullies are experts in timing

and nuance (Craig & Pepler, 2003). The subtleties of the differences between teasing and taunting allow bullies to disguise the maliciousness of their actions to any third-party observers.

Craig and Pepler (2003) highlighted the differences between teasing and taunting. Teasing is determined to be a normal part of friendships and friendship groups, while taunting is not acceptable and is a form of bullying. Teasing is fun and innocent in nature; all the people involved are laughing. Taunting, on the other hand, is one-sided and does not make the relationship better. Unfortunately, to an outsider the differences can often be difficult to detect. What an observer sees, how the victim feels, and what the bully intends may be very different. Coloroso (2003) clarified the difference between the two. While the differences are subtle, they are essential for the bystander to understand, as bullies will often say they are just teasing when in truth their intent is cruel.

Olweus began examining bullying as a didactic interaction between the bully and the victim. Traditionally, discussions around bullying focus on a dichotomous relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. This view ignores the role of the bystander, who is present in 85 percent of bullying incidents (Craig & Pepler, 1997). Craig and Pepler found that having other children watching factored strongly in whether the bullying incident occurred, and once it did occur, these peers affected the final outcome. Indeed, as O'Connell, Pepler, and Craig (1999) concurred, peers are documented as being present in as many as 85 percent of bullying episodes. In fact, O'Connell et al. determined that in 81 percent of bullying episodes, peers actually reinforced the negative behaviors, only intervening in 13 percent of the episodes. Moreover, when the bystander did intervene, it was often in a socially inappropriate manner, such as by pushing or shoving the people involved rather than using words or getting help from a teacher nearby. The "group context is especially relevant" (Salmivalli, 2001, p. 400) to problem solving and deterring bullying. The acknowledgment of a third-party role has changed the way that researchers and educational professionals view bullying episodes.

Not until the late 1990s did the dyad become a triad with the introduction of the bystander. Olweus (1993) found that peers are invariably involved in bullying. Peers can act as henchmen for the bully, peers can be neutral, peers can be disengaged onlookers, or peers can be seen as actively helping or defending the victim (Olweus). To blur further the tridactic relationships of bullying, the roles are at times interchangeable. For example, the student who is typically the bully can be either the bullied or the bystander, and vice versa. While at times the roles are interchangeable, researchers have attempted to clarify each role. The role of the bullied, traditionally known as the victim, has been defined by many researchers.

However, Coloroso (2003) put forward the more recent and complete definition. The *bullied* is the person who repeatedly receives the attention of the bully in the form of negative behavior. The targeted behaviors of the bully cause fear, distress, or harm to the bullied.

The most recently explored aspect of bullying, and the focus of this book, is that of the bystander. The definition is evolving, although the role has been acknowledged since the late 1990s. Olweus (1993) defined the *bystander* as an individual who is present but does not take part in the situation or event. As educators, we use these terms in reference to students with relative ease. The child-centric perspective has been the prevalent one when thinking about the bully, the bullied, and the bystander. Our comfort level changes when we begin to think of ourselves in these terms.

THE CONTINUUM TO ACTION

The Continuum to Action organizes our knowledge regarding the power of bystander intervention and our knowledge regarding the educational professional and bystanderism. Studies by Craig and Pepler (1997) demonstrated that bullying episodes occur every 7 minutes on the playground and every 25 minutes in the classrooms. These researchers also found that bullying episodes stop in less than ten seconds 57 percent of the time when someone intervenes on behalf of the victim. In 2000 Craig, Pepler, and Atlas found that educational professionals only intervene in 4 percent of bullying episodes.

Bystanders, according to Coloroso (2003), are people who stand idly by when bullying occurs or sometimes ignore bullying and as a result are not innocent in the bullying cycle. Typically, a bystander is thought to be a peer. The work of Craig et al. (2000) framed educators as bystanders in the same terms as Coloroso (2003) defined student bystanders, as they were observed to be idle in over 80 percent of bullying episodes. Educational professionals are therefore defined as bystanders when they are idle in the bullying cycle.

Bystander Cycle

The *bystander cycle*, based in traditional bystander research by Huston, Ruggiero, Conner, and Geis (1981), determined that being idle can occur at five points in the intervention process.

1. Noticing that something unusual is going on
2. Deciding that something is indeed out of the ordinary

3. Determining the extent to which one is responsible for helping
4. Determining whether one has the skills to help
5. Deciding whether or not to help the person in need

Extending the Bystander Cycle Within the Continuum to Action

This book will frame the traditional five stages of bystander intervention within the Continuum to Action. The Continuum to Action extends the traditional five stages into a trisectioned seven-stage continuum. The pre-bystandersim stage supports the movement of the educational professional to action through the creation of a vehicle for understanding bystanderism and one's own behaviors. The proactive, decision-making section of the spectrum is designed to motivate intentional actions. Finally, the post-bystanderism stage extends the incident and interactions into a clearly communicated learning experience, which creates a new common understanding.

Pre-Bystanderism

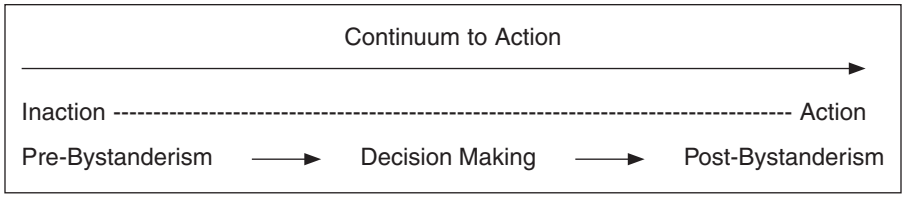
The pre-bystanderism stage of the Continuum to Action occurs before the educational professional enters the decision-making stage, because it is through the self-reflection that occurs here that he or she will be able to notice that something unusual is going on. In the pre-bystanderism part of the continuum, the educational professional examines his or her own beliefs and adjusts the paradigms of perception.

Decision Making

Decision making is the part of the Continuum to Action that occurs in the moment. It is comprised of a series of four small decisions. Educational professionals very quickly need to decide that something is out of the ordinary, determine their level of responsibility, and decide if they have the skills to help before making the final decision of whether or not to help.

Post-Bystanderism

The post-bystanderism end of the spectrum allows the educational professional to extend the action of intervening into a "teachable moment" through clearly communicating with the people involved, including the other students present and the parent community. Closing the communication gap is a very powerful tool for transforming a negative incident into a learning moment.



- Pre-bystanderism—To be able to notice that something unusual is going on
  1. Understand personal primed perceptions.
  2. Remove altruistic blind spots.
- Decision making—The rapid decisions that need to occur in the moment
  3. Decide that something is indeed out of the ordinary.
  4. Determine the extent to which one is responsible for helping.
  5. Determine whether one has the skills to help.
  6. Decide whether or not to help the person in need.
- Post-bystanderism—Essential step for schools that follows helping the person in need
  7. Close the communication gap.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

While the definition of the *bystander* is inclusive of everyone, it was the work of Craig and Pepler (2003) that suggested that educational professionals be framed clearly with this label. The labeling of educators as bystanders is a huge elephant that no one wants to acknowledge because it does not match with our beliefs about teachers. It is incredibly uncomfortable to think that the adults to whom we trust our children on a daily basis are standing by and doing nothing while bullying occurs. The teacher in me has great difficulty thinking these thoughts, let alone putting them down in writing. It needs to be acknowledged at this point that I do not believe that the majority of teachers are purposefully bystanders. My research clearly found that it is lack of knowledge, not lack of good intentions, that creates bystanderism in educators. My data, which the chapters of this book will examine more in depth, showed that the most prevalent reason for not intervening is not lack of caring but lack of awareness. Of respondents, 80 percent indicated that this is the number one reason that they do not intervene in bullying episodes. I truly believe in the good of teachers and that they are doing the best they can

to manage in increasingly complex and demanding settings. That said, I also embrace the idea expressed by Maya Angelou: "You did then what you knew how to do; and when you knew better, you did better." By acknowledging the elephant and examining it closely, we can know better and ultimately do better.

Thin Slicing the Bystander Cycle

The art of "thin slicing" is the ability to examine something, an incident or an action, in slivers. Malcolm Gladwell argued in *Blink* (2005) that our intuitive knowledge can be developed through experience, training, and knowledge. Through thin slicing bystanderism, we can determine what to target for educators to improve their natural instincts and reactions. Thin slicing something as complex as bystanderism allows us to develop a better understanding of all the layers and ideas contained within. Thin slicing also allows for the ability to analyze a concept with greater depth and to target actions and solutions with more precision. It lets us scrutinize the many subdecisions that occur in what on the surface appears to be one simple act.

Bystanderism on the surface appears to be one simple decision. Through thin slicing bystanderism, however, one realizes that it is a collection of a series of five small decisions that occur in rapid succession to create either action or inaction. Huston et al. (1981) parsed bystanderism by considering five slices:

Slice 1: Notice that something unusual is going on.

Slice 2: Decide that something is indeed out of the ordinary.

Slice 3: Determine the extent to which one has the responsibility to help.

Slice 4: Determine whether one has the skill to help.

Slice 5: Decide whether or not to aid the person in need.

Slice 1

Slice 1 is to notice that something unusual is going on. Epp and Epp (2000) found that this is often difficult for educational professionals as a result of a strong code of silence among students related to bullying. In 2000, Pepler and Craig's research supported the conclusions of Epp and Epp when they found that 53 percent of students did not tell a teacher about being bullied, 37 percent did not tell their parents about it, and 28 percent told no one at all. Reasons most often given for not reporting were that the victim did not want to make things worse, the

victim felt the problem was not serious enough, or the victim did not want the hassle (Joong & Ridler, 2005). The code of silence has the ability to stop the cycle of intervention at the first slice, as often the subtlety of social bullying makes it very difficult to observe and the bystander may not notice that something unusual, bullying, is occurring.

Slice 2

Slice 2 occurs when a bystander decides that something is indeed out of the ordinary. He or she must then decide whether something is wrong and if help is needed. Sorting out which behaviors constitute bullying is a difficult process and can contribute to a lack of intervention in bullying situations (Hazler, 1998; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). It would appear that indirect bullying is particularly challenging for teachers to recognize and that they have difficulty knowing whether and how to intervene in this type of bullying. It seems that the element of subjectivity, or how educational professionals have been primed, affects their ability to "see" bullying. As Craig et al. (2000) found, teachers characterize incidents differently depending on their own definition of bullying. Several studies demonstrate that many teachers referred to subjectivity, particularly with regard to indirect bullying (Ireland & Ireland, 2000; Siann, Callaghan, Lockhart, & Rawson, 1993). Underestimating the harm caused by forms of bullying such as nonviolent victimization may lead to an inappropriate response, which can amount to further victimization (Astor, 1995).

Slice 3

Once the situation is defined by the bystander, slice 3 is the mini decision to determine the extent to which one has the responsibility to help. In one study, Boulton (1997) elicited teachers' attitudes toward bullying and their beliefs about their ability to deal with bullying. Boulton found that most of the teachers considered physical assaults and threats bullying, but a significant proportion did not view behaviors such as exclusion or name-calling as bullying. Townsend-Wiggins (2001) came to a similar conclusion when she established that teachers' understanding of bullying, particularly relational bullying, was limited. Nicolaides, Toda, and Smith (2002) conducted a study on teacher candidates' knowledge and attitudes regarding bullying, their views on the significance of bullying, and their confidence in dealing with bullying. The respondents depicted bullies as having low self-esteem and lacking social skills, which contradicts emerging evidence that some bullies actually "may be quite socially skilled, adept manipulators of the social environment who can get rewards from bullying more vulnerable peers" (Nicolaides et al., p. 115). A growing body of literature indicates that educational professionals are not comfortable with

or capable of intervening consistently and effectively (Bolton, 1997; Craig & Pepler, 2003; Dawkins & Hill, 1995; Mishna, 2004; Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003). Teachers' understanding may well determine whether they see an incident as bullying and whether they intervene appropriately (Boulton). Some educational professionals make assumptions about characteristics that victims will display with regard to their appearance or social abilities, and these assumptions seem to prevent them from recognizing victimized children who do not match them (Rigby & Bagshaw).

Intertwined with subjectivity is empathy, which emerged as a theme that appeared to influence how teachers responded to the children who were identified as bullied (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003). Other research has similarly found an association between teachers' empathy for the bullied child and their responses (Craig et al., 2000; Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). For example, teachers who experienced a similar event in their own lives were more likely to respond and intervene on behalf of the bullied. However, teachers who did not have a positive perception of the bullied student were more likely to remain unresponsive to the situation (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004).

It would appear from the current literature that a large amount of bullying behavior occurs in the classroom or other school settings where adults are present to observe and intervene (Swearer, Song, Cary, Eagle, & Mickelson, 2001). Teachers tend to underestimate bullying and do little to discourage it (Olweus, 1993), and a lack of consistent discipline for bullying reinforces the belief that such aggressive acts will achieve a desired goal without negative consequences (Howard, Horne, & Joliff, 2002). Teachers said they almost always intervened 71 percent of the time, while students said that intervention occurred only 25 percent of the time (Pepler & Craig, 2000). Studies also indicate that teachers intervene in 14 percent of classroom episodes and in only 4 percent of school ground episodes (Pepler & Craig). The work of Epp and Epp (1998) supported the findings of Pepler and Craig; their research determined that students reported that teachers should be more aware of and responsive to bullying itself or complaints of bullying. Through their interviews with students, Pepler and Craig determined that 42 percent of bullies and 46 percent of victims report that they have talked to teachers about problems related to bullying. Of the victims who did report the incident, most felt that nothing was done and were dissatisfied with how the episode was handled (Joong & Ridler, 2005). Developing an awareness of the complexity of this phenomenon may lead teachers to become "more vigilant and responsive to bullying problems which, in turn, may give children more confidence to seek teachers' assistance when bullying occurs" (Atlas & Pepler, 1998, p. 94).

Slice 4

When the bystander assumes responsibility for helping the victim and moves into slice 4 of the decision, the bystander must decide whether he or she possesses the appropriate form of help to render. Educational professionals have various levels of training with regard to bullying. In fact, most of their training comes from reading the teachers' guides that accompany whatever program they are using to teach their students. They are somewhat trained on how to teach students about their roles but have very limited training directly related to their own roles and actions. Educational professionals need training that is specifically targeted to help them overcome the dilemma of not wanting to make things worse. In the moment, when they observe a bullying situation, they need to decide whether or not they have the skills to make a difference. Telling a student to stop is a very limited way to make an intervention, yet it is the only way most educators are aware of. The appropriate forms of help one can give are multifaceted. Therefore, slice 4 poses a very difficult mini question for most educators to answer with confidence.

Slice 5

Finally in slice 5, after the bystander has progressed rapidly through the four previous sections of this decision, he or she must decide whether or not to aid the person in need (Huston et al., 1981). Most antibullying education programs have focused on how to empower student bystanders, and while this is an important aspect of antibullying education, that alone will not change the cycle (Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

It is important for educational professionals to recognize that how they understand and respond to bullying can have an effect on their students. According to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory "teachers need to understand that their response to bullying makes a difference" (2001, p. 10). Doubting a child's view may contribute to his or her lack of disclosure to teachers or any other educational professional (Dawkins & Hill, 1995; Mishna, 2004). Those involved in bullying (bullies, the bullied, and bystanders) are likely to have more negative opinions of a teacher's capacity to resolve conflicts (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003). Despite the importance of intervention, Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, and Wiener (2005) determined that teachers often remain in the early stages of the decision to intervene when they are unaware that a child feels bullied; they therefore do not consider the situation serious and do not respond appropriately.

One of the tools that teachers have been given to support them in bullying situations comes in the form of antibullying programs. These programs

have taken on many forms and labels since they were introduced in the early 1970s. According to Mishna et al. (2005) many teachers surveyed felt that they were not capable of delivering all the curricular requirements and addressing bullying concerns on a daily basis. The addition of another element to an already full day has left teachers feeling pressure and stress regarding student behavior (Hazler, 1998). Furthermore, it has been difficult to choose which programs teachers should spend their time and energy implementing, as identifying which programs have actually resulted in a decrease in school violence has proven difficult (Schultz & Da Costa, 2005). Rigby (1998) found that regardless of what program is used, when all members of the school community are supportive, the success rate can be as high as 60 to 70 percent. Unfortunately, educational professionals struggle to know what their role is and how to support students due to the lack of alignment between existing school policies and guidelines, inconsistent systemic support, and distinguishing between "normal" and bullying behaviors (Mishna et al., 2005).

Two More Slices in the Continuum to Action

The five slices just detailed are the five mini decisions that need to be made to create action in the world outside of education, but they are only part of the process needed to create action within the world of schools. The Continuum to Action incorporates the five slices but it expands beyond the cycle in both directions. The Continuum to Action includes two pre-bystanderism slices necessary to allow education professionals to begin to understand their role within the bullying tridactic relationship. The post-bystanderism slice is also important within the school setting, as it addresses the need for communication that exists both within schools themselves and with their extended communities.

Within the pre-bystanderism section of the Continuum to Action, educational professionals need to be reflective practitioners to begin to understand their own biases and perceptions regarding bullying. The first stage of the continuum addresses how personal histories and experiences prime our perceptions, making it challenging to see situations as they are. The second stage in the pre-bystanderism section focuses on helping educational professionals remove their own barriers to action by creating an understanding of their own altruistic blind spots. This self-reflective phase leads into the decision-making section of the continuum, which occurs in the moment. This is comprised of the original components of the bystander intervention cycle created by Huston et al. (1981). Finally, the post-bystanderism phase addresses the communication of actions at the end of the bullying episode. It acknowledges that in schools, bullying

does not end when the incident ends but when, through good communication, learning occurs and a common understanding is reached.

TURNING ON THE LIGHTS

The Continuum to Action is like turning a light switch. Once you begin to be a truly reflective practitioner regarding your own beliefs and actions, you will be able to see your path to action lit clearly before you.

We have all experienced the shock to our systems when, first thing in the morning after a peaceful night's sleep, the lights are suddenly turned on. The next time it happens, try to be conscious of your own reaction. There is an immediate instinct to close your eyes and turn away quickly. Your body reacts as if it is in pain. Your face visibly squints and flinches. Once you get through the initial discomfort and your eyes adjust, you realize that you can see and function so much more effectively with the lights on than you could stumbling around in the dark.

Turning on the lights and examining bullying through the lens of radical transparency and honesty invokes the same instinct to close your eyes and turn away quickly. The initial discomfort of acknowledging that what we have been doing hasn't been working and the pain of self-reflection is only temporary, however. Once our eyes adjust to the truth of the current situation, we can see and function much more effectively for the benefit of our students. As U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis famously put it, "Sunlight is the best disinfectant." The blinding brightness of sunlight allows us to see the real truths about our own roles in bullying and thereby begin the process to remove the shadows in which bullying thrives.

ACTION: PULSE CHECK

How is the heartbeat of your school? Consider the following questions with regard to yourself, your school, and the school's individual needs. You may wish to consider them by yourself, in conjunction with your Safe Schools Team, or with your entire staff. If you feel that you or your staff are already knowledgeable in a particular area, you may choose to skip the suggested chapter(s) and related activities. However, if you answer no to any of the questions, you can read the suggested chapter and complete the suggested activities to target specific weaknesses.

1. Do you have a Safe Schools Team at your school?

   Yes No—Go to Chapter 1 on page 15.

2. Have you and your entire staff (teachers, educational assistants, office professionals, and custodians) received antibullying and character education training?

   Yes No—Go to the Decision Making section on pages 55–86.

3. Do you and your entire staff have a common language to use when discussing bullying?

   Yes No—Go to Chapter 7 on page 89.

4. Do you and your entire staff have a good understanding of where and when bullying occurs in your school?

   Yes No—Go to Chapter 3 on page 39.

5. Do you and your entire staff have a solid understanding of your expectations with regard to active student supervision?

   Yes No—Go to Chapter 6 on page 77.

6. Do you and your entire staff know your procedures for reporting incidents to the office?

   Yes No—Go to Chapter 7 on page 89.

7. Do you and your entire staff know what behaviors are unacceptable and which ones are desirable?

   Yes No—Go to Chapter 4 on page 55.

8. Do you have new staff members who are not familiar with your school's expectations?

   Yes No—Go to the Decision Making section on page 55.

9. Has your Safe Schools Team been effective since its formation?

   Yes No—Go to Chapter 8 on page 97.

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(Continued)

10. Do you and your staff have a common understanding of how to communicate effectively with your parent community?

    Yes No—Go to Chapter 9 on page 109.

11. Do you and your staff have a common belief system with regard to bullying?

    Yes No—Go to Chapter 8 on page 23.