Understanding the problem of school violence: predictive factors of bullying and victimization

Alisha Santana
Whittier College

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.utc.edu/mps

Part of the Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholar.utc.edu/mps/vol9/iss1/3

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals, Magazines, and Newsletters at UTC Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Modern Psychological Studies by an authorized editor of UTC Scholar. For more information, please contact scholar@utc.edu.
Understanding the Problem of School Violence: Predictive Factors of Bullying and Victimization

With the recent surge in school violence, academics have been motivated to investigate factors that influence this tragic phenomenon. Parents, teachers, and other professionals have made broad generalizations as to why children act so maliciously, and some of the research confirms these common sense notions. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the literature and scrutinize its validity. The current paper examines research addressing predictive factors of both bullying and victimization. Results have shown that access to guns, parenting style, parental involvement, social networks, delinquency, social isolation, and prosocial behavior all are associated with bullying behavior. Similarly, victimization is related to poor parent-child interactions, peer rejection, poor social networks, unsafe schools, and depression.

The Uniform Crime Report recently indicated that homicide and suicide committed by adolescents is skyrocketing (Ciampi, 2001). America has recently been rudely awakened by these uncanny statistics, which are elucidated most clearly by the recent surge in school shootings. The nation as a whole has developed an overwhelming curiosity regarding who these offenders are, who their victims are, and why they choose to behave in such hedonistic manners. Reporters, educators, and parents, searching for answers, have speculated that the school avenger resorts to murder because it is the final option available to cope with the victimization they have experienced in school. Researchers seek to investigate bully/victim predictive factors as possible indicators of school murder and homicide.

When considering the factors that may lead to school violence, fighting, as well as teasing, appear to be common variables that most lay people consider. However, recent school violence has forced researchers to examine new factors and interactions for understanding bullying and victimization (Bastche, & Knoff, 1994).

Bullying behavior has received a great deal of attention as one factor contributing to school violence (Batsche, & Knoff, 1994). The role of recent research on bullying has been one in which characteristics could be derived in order to prevent school violence, because bullying can be viewed as one of the precursors of school violence. Once research is compiled and agreed upon, a list of predictive factors can be created and used by educators to help prevent school wide problems. From its inception in the 70s, research
on bullying behavior has been widespread in nations such as Scandinavia, England, Japan, and Australia (Haynie et al., 2001). Academics within the United States most likely have not focused efforts on bullying because it was not seen as a genuine problem. Until recently, with the numerous counts of children plotting out schemes against classmates (e.g., Santee High School), and entire schools (e.g., Columbine High School), bullying behavior was considered part of the maturation process that all boys experienced. Even more astonishing it the fact that the behavior was often brushed off with the saying, "boys will be boys." School violence in suburban, predominantly white communities, as well as inner city schools, does exist and it needs to be understood. Bullying and victimization does not only occur with males, it also in common in females, but tends to be relational as opposed to physical (Baldry, & Farrington, 2000).

Victims have also received much recent attention (Batsche, & Knoff, 1994; Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1997; Schwartz, McFadyen-Ketchum, Dodge, Pettit & Bate, 1999). It is possible that recent school violence arises out of perpetrators who were outcasts, victimized by their peers, and forced into solidarity. Is this a plausible explanation for such horrendous acts? Does being victimized place children and adolescents at risk for such outbursts of rage and hatred? These are two questions that possibly can be answered by the research that has been conducted.

With a newly sparked interest in bully and victim roles as possible contributors to school violence, much research has been conducted specifically on the two categories, either bullying or victimization (Batsche, & Knoff, 1994). Researchers have aimed to uncover predictive factors of those children and adolescents who have potential for becoming bullies or victims. Emphasis has been placed on early detection in order to prevent large-scale disasters. Furthermore, if educators and other professionals are capable of detecting those individuals at risk for bullying or victimization, not only will students who would otherwise go to extremes be identified, overall school violence (e.g. fights, quarrels) should also decrease, thus making the school environment safer and more conducive to learning.

Previous review of literature on bullies have focused mainly on predicting who will become bullies; they have failed to extensively consider the role of the victim as an integral piece in the process (Baumrind, 1971) so this framework will be presented. Next, the research on bullying and victimization has been somewhat tainted by the inconsistencies in the operational definitions of critical terms such as bully and victim; in light of this controversy, several definitions will be discussed. Finally, a critical analysis of the different predictive factors that have been significant in recent research will be discussed and a comprehensive list of predictive factors will then be compiled at the end of each section on both bullying and victimization.

**A Popular Theoretical Framework:**

**Baumrind's Parenting Styles**

The studies conducted on bullying a victimization behavior have generally been data driven. However, some researchers have considered parenting styles (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Berthold, & Hoover, 2000; Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999; Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1994; Curtner-Smith, 2000; Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 200; Haynie et al., 2001; Shields and Cicchetti, 2001) as a theoretical framework for studying bullying and victimization behavior. The parenting style theory, developed by Baumrind (1971), sprang out of her early research on parent-child relationships. Most professionals agree that Baumrind's description of the four parenting typologies, and their effects on child behavior constitute a theory that explains how early, and continuing, family experiences can affect a child.
Baumrind (1971) has clearly defined four parenting styles that influence child development and later relationships. Each relationship has the potential for growth, or inhibition, dependent upon the parenting style that the parent uses with the child (Baumrind). Baumrind's for parenting typologies are: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful.

An authoritarian parent is a parent who employs high control over a child, but fails to create an environment that is loving and warm (Baumrind, 1971). Baumrind emphasized that it is commonplace for authoritarian parents to frequently use punitive forms of discipline in order to control their children when they diverge from the parents' thinking. Children who are raised by authoritarian parents are found to be much less independent, less trusting of others, and more skeptical than children who are raised by authoritative parents (Baumrind). In relation to bullying and victimization, it would be likely that both bullies and victims evolve out of the authoritarian style of parenting because the children are constantly forced to conform and not given liberty to choose their own identity. When confronted with a problem the fully may see the victim as an easy target and the victim may submit. The other possibility is that the bully may act aggressively because aggression was modeled to the child through the use of punitive and corporal punishment used by the authoritarian parent(s).

An authoritative parent, the ideal typography according to Baumrind (1971), is high on control (similar to the authoritarian parent); however, authoritative parents also accept and love, and genuinely care for their children. Children of authoritative parents generally tend to be well-adjusted, happy individuals (Baumrind). These children most likely would not be involved in the bully/victim dance. Because children raised by authoritative parents tend to employ prosocial behavior and are socially informed, they may not resort to violence to deal with peers. Further more, nor would they willingly submit to violence from others.

Baumrind (1971) also distinguishes between permissive and neglectful parenting styles. Baumrind would argue that both of the aforementioned styles of parenting are detrimental and have potential for causing problems for a child as s/he develops relationships outside of the home. Permissive parents are low on control, but continue to score relatively high on the warmth factor (Baumrind). The problem with a permissive parent is that the child begins to dictate the rules and will engage in role reversal with the parent, thus leaving the child without limits or regulations and with free reign to act and behave as the child wishes (Baumrind). A child who is used to getting his/her way may become angry when a peer does not conform to his/her requests. The child has not been taught to compromise; instead the parents do whatever the child dictates. Then, when the child is presented with a peer who will not comply, the bully may be more likely to attack violently because s/he is so angry.

The neglectful parent is not only low on control, but also low on warmth. Parents categorized as neglectful basically have no regard for their children and their children are forced to forge through life without guidance or support (Baumrind, 1971). It is important to not that Baumrind was not able to categorize any of her subjects as fully neglected. This was attributed to the fact that most of the individuals came from well-endowed families who were highly educated (Baumrind).

Bullying behavior has been examined in light of Baumrind's (1971) parenting style typologies because they seem to agree with common sense, as well as maintain high reliability and validity. All of the researchers who have considered parenting styles to be an issue (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Bowers et al., 1994; Curtner-Smith, 2000; Espelage et al., 2000; Haynie et al., 2001; Shields and Cicchetti, 2001) have looked at least at one factor or portion of Baumrind's parenting style matrix. Even though her theory is not directly stated in all of the articles, the basic underlying ideas are common throughout each one.

DEFINITIONS

Bullying Behavior

The problem with defining bullying behaviors lies within the fact that researchers explain and present the definition of bullying to different degrees. For example, Boulton and Smith (1994) included physical and verbal aggression and the fact that the bully attacks the victim without reason. A clearer definition is one presented by
O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) who provided descriptions of behaviors that would be considered bullying. For example, O'Moore and Kirkham include teasing or saying mean things to another child, but they chose to elaborate. In contrast, Pellegrini, Bartini, and Brooks (1999) presented a limited definition when they described bullying as “youngsters who repeatedly use negative actions, such as physical or verbal aggression, against victims” (p. 216). This definition is ambiguous and may confuse children when they have to label and categorize classmates as bullies or victims. A problem could arise if a child needs to classify someone, and the definition is ambiguous, the child may misrepresent the child to be something that s/he truly is not.

To one who is reviewing the literature, all of the definitions above seem to carry the same basic undertones: intentionally harming another child, either physically or verbally, or another's benefit. In order to clarify that children and researchers are taking into account all dimensions of the term, it may be more helpful to standardize the definition when presenting the term bully of subjects. If a standard definition is agreed upon and utilized in each research study, the results may be even more consistent. Olweus's (1993) definition of bullying, as cited in O'Moore and Kirkham (2001), seems to be the most widely used and all-inclusive definition of bullying behavior. One suggestion would be to use the entire definition and perhaps elaborate upon sections of the definition that may be unclear. Clarity may come from including observable and measurable behaviors such as hitting, kicking, sending rude notes, and spreading rumors about a person.

Victimization Behavior

Victimization tends to be defined stably over the majority of research studies as well. Most of the researchers did not provide exact definitions of victims, except to say that they were the individuals who endured bullying behavior (O’Moore, & Kirkham, 2001; Pellegrini et al., 1999; Nansel et al., 2001). However, Boulton and Smith (1994) did label a victim as a child who “is picked on, or hit, or teased, or has nasty things done to them by other children...” (p. 318). By virtue of defining a bully it is somewhat known who a victim will be. A victim receives behaviors set forth by a bully. Again, in order to keep studies consistent and thorough, it may be easier, once a definition of bullying has been agreed upon, to tell subjects that children who are victims are individuals who are the targets for bullies. Then explain victimization in direct relation to the definition presented for bullying.

**PREDICTIVE FACTORS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOR**

**Characteristics Within the Family Environment**

**Access to Guns**

Recently, as has been demonstrated by the multitude of school shootings, children seem to have relatively free access to guns. Interestingly, not many researchers have examined gun access and its relationship to bullying behavior (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999). Bosworth et al., one of the exceptions, examined children’s self-reports of gun accessibility. A significant positive correlation existed between gun accessibility and bullying behavior. Gun access is related to the family environment because the children reported getting the guns from their homes more often than thorough any other means (Bosworth et al.). This is unnerving because if bullies are using violence and intimidation as social means of interacting, the gun at school poses a serious threat. Whether or not the child intends to use the gun is irrelevant; the gun could accidentally fire and kill an innocent child.

**Parenting Styles**

Many researchers have studied the effects that different parenting styles have on bullying behavior (Baldry, & Farrington, 2000; Bowers et al., 1994; Espelage et al., 2000; Curtner-Smith, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001). A connecting fiber that runs through the literature is that punitive and corporal means of discipline are highly correlated with bullying behavior (Baldry, & Farrington, 2000; Bowers et al., 1994; Espelage et al., 2000; Curtner-Smith, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001). These results abound despite the fact that Baldry and Farrington, Bowers et al., Espelage et al., Curtner-Smith, and Nansel et al., all used different extreme forms of punishment on their scales.

The way in which each author operationalized parenting styles was unique and different. Baldry and Farrington (2000), using Baumrand’s matrix of parenting styles, focused on measuring authoritarian, punitive, low supportive parenting as having possible relationships to bullying behavior. What was uncovered by this study was
that children who were maltreated were much more likely to engage in bullying behavior (Baldry, & Farrington). Maltreatment would most likely fall within the neglectful, or even authoritarian typologies. An authoritarian parent, high on control, may take punishment to an extreme in order to make a child conform to the parent's wishes. On the other hand, a neglectful parent, low on control and warmth, may not pay any attention to the child and may leave the child without resources to maintain hygiene or health. Without proper parental support and guidance, the children may be more focused on survival and not on how they are acting socially.

Along the same lines, Curtner-Smith (2000) operationalized parenting styles by the use of inappropriate disciplinary practices. Inappropriate disciplinary practices were defined as using physical force to punish a child (Curtner-Smith). Considering the two definitions presented by Baldry and Farrington (2000) and Curtner-Smith, it can be seen that researchers have been aware that extreme methods of punishment can be related to bullying. This could be due to modeling, as discussed in the Social Learning Theory, or because these children are already more aggressive because they come from homes with aggressive parents. However, there needs to be consistency in what types of parenting behaviors will be included in the definition of poor parenting so as to remain consistent. It is not clear whether children pick up on the aggressive behaviors as a result of being physically punished, or if the aggressive children were already genetically predisposed to being aggressive. What is evident is that using physical force to punish a child heavily impacts the child's social communication and interaction abilities.

In terms of Baumrind's (1971) matrix of parenting styles, Bowers et al. (1994) would argue that bullies come from families that are neglectful and/or completely uninvolved in the child's life. This seems to be an appropriate conclusion because if a parent is not involved in raising or shaping a child, the child will be left to use non-inhibited means to deal with peers and other individuals. Future research should examine whether these individuals have tried to support themselves, beginning at a young age, and simply have a dull and pessimistic outlook on life. If this is so, it may make sense that they don't care how they treat other children, as long as the behavior makes the bully feel better about him/herself.

**Parental Involvement**

Another influence that the family appears to have on a child's bullying behavior is the amount of involvement and time parents spend with their children. Curtner-Smith (2000) and Espelage, Bosworth, and Simon (2000) all explored the amount of time that a parent spends with a child. A general scale used for detecting conduct disorder in boys, developed by Loeber (1990), as cited in Curtner-Smith, contains a subscale that measures parent-child involvement and was used to define the term in the study done by Curtner-Smith. Similarly, Espelage et al. examined the relationship between adult contact and time spent with family. Note that Espelage et al. assumed that if a child was spending time with his/her family, they were actually interacting with one another. The measure used to assess time spent with family was developed especially for this study (Espelage et al.). A major difference that exists between the two measures is that Curtner-Smith actually measured parent-child interaction, whereas Espelage et al. assessed time spent together. Time spent together does not necessarily indicate that the parent(s) and child are interacting. The results from both studies indicated that the more parent-child involvement (Curtner-Smith) and time spent with family (Espelage) that a child was a part of, the less likely s/he was to engage in bullying behavior.

Nansel et al. (2001) also considered parental involvement, but slightly differently from the aforementioned sets. Nansel et al. found that children classified as bullies were more likely to have parents with permissive attitudes toward teen drinking. Nansel et al.'s approach is different because they specified that a parent's attitude toward teen drinking has a negative effect on children, instead of simply lumping all permissive parental attitudes together. The results could suggest that parents who have more permissive attitudes toward drinking may have more permissive attitudes toward other important issues as well. In addition to drinking attitudes, Nansel et al. also found that parental involvement in the child's school activities was negatively related to bullying behavior. If a parent was concerned about his/her child's daily activities and spoke to the child about what was going on at school, the child was less likely to engage in
bullying behavior.

Overall, what goes on in the home seems to generalize beyond the home to other types of relationships, namely peer relationships. What the child sees at home may become second nature and be accepted in his/her everyday coping. If guns are accessible in the home (Bosworth et al., 1999), if parents engage in punitive and demeaning forms of punishment (Baldry, Farrington, 2000; Espelage et al. 2000; Curtner-Smith, 2000; & Nansel et al., 2001), if parents are uninvolved and indifferent to the activities that their children in at school (Curtner-Smith; Espelage et al.) a child is much more likely to engage in bullying behavior with his/her peers. All of these researchers who have examined the relationship between familial environment and bullying behavior have suggested that what the children learn within the home is critical, because socialization and acceptable means of dealing with problems and frustration are first learned in the home. If a child is taught to deal with problems aggressively, punitively, or corporally, the child will most likely generalize that behavior to friends and broader peer groups.

Characteristics Within the Peer Group

Stability of Peer Group

Salmivalli, Lappalainen, and Lagerspetz (1998) investigated peer relationships of children in Italy as a factor that is important in bullying behavior. Social networks allow researchers to examine many different relationships that may exist between peers. Salmivalli et al. did not run a social network analysis, however, they did consider self-reported friendships. What Salmivalli et al. considered to be important were lasting relationships, and an individual’s likelihood to remain a bully after a large move or change. A couple of years earlier, Salmivalli et al. ran a similar experiment (Salmivalli et al., 1996, as cited in Salmivalli et al., 1998) and gathered information on peer groups and classmate groups.

In the more recent study, Salmivalli et al. were able to compare the past classmates to the current classmates. Unlike the United States, students from Italy remain with the same group of kids they had been with for the majority of their lives. Salmivalli et al. found that the stability of the child’s bullying behavior was not much different when comparing the children who were with the same classmates and the children who had changed. However, this should be interpreted with caution. Salmivalli et al. had a very small sample size, which may have nullified the results. Perhaps if the sample size was larger more of an effect could be seen. Another important piece of information that was unveiled in the Salmivalli et al. study is that it was easier to predict bullying for girls than for boys (Salmivalli et al.). This is interesting since boys are typically more involved in bullying; it would be though that the boy’s peers would have more of an influence. However, because bullying for girls is more situation-specific, it may be that girls discuss and analyze their behavior together much more often than boys do (Salmivalli et al.).

Popularity

Nansel et al. (2000) have examined the impact of feeling lonely, left out, or being along, from the bully’s perspective. Bullies are not necessarily outcasts, nor are they examples of the popular kids; they just clearly do not fit into any typical school clique. Where they do fit in is with other bullies. Nansel et al. have emphasized that bullies may feel lonely, left out, and alone just as often as victims do. Nansel et al. reported that poor relationships with classmates and higher levels of loneliness were correlated with bullying behavior. On the other hand, Nansel et al. suggested that bullies had a higher ability to make friends when compared to the victims of bullying behavior, which appears to be contradictory. An explanation for this was not provided, and the relationship between loneliness, bullying, and number of friends needs to be investigated with more detail.

Pellegrini et al. (1999) and O’Moore and Kirkham (2001) have also considered a child’s popularity as a possible predictive factor of bullying behavior. Pellegrini et al. found that bullies tend to nominate other bullies reciprocally more often than they nominated victims or those not involved in the bullying endeavor. They did not seem to be loners or isolated. The bullies simply nominated other bullies as their peer groups, making bullies popular within the bully clique and not within the victim or not otherwise involved groups. O’Moore and Kirkham found that there was not a significant relationship between bullying behavior and popularity. Therefore, depending upon how the term popularity is defined, different results may arise.
Group Variables and Time Spent Alone

In a similar vein, Boulton (1999) and Boulton (1995) both considered group variables such as the size of the group, time each target child spent alone, the types of games that are played within the group, and the type of group content. Group size and time alone may seem to be indicative of popularity, but considering the fact that in both studies Boulton observed groups and did not take specific measures, it can only be said who each child was playing with. Boulton (1999) found that time spent alone was a strong predictor for bullying behavior. Girls who spent more time alone were more likely to become bullies whereas males were more likely to become victims (Boulton, 1999). This seems to contradict the study by Petlegrini et al. (1999). Bouldton (1999) seemed to find bullies to be more of the loner type as opposed to being involved with friends. In contrast to the Boulton (1999) study, Boulton (1995) found that bullies tended to have very large social networks, leaving them with more companions in comparison to victims and those not involved. Another interesting factor that Boulton (1995) found is that bullies were seen engaging in rule-governed games more than victims were. But, victims were seen engaging in positive social contact more than bullies were. This area of bully popularity and involvement with other children (outside of instances of bullying) has not provided consistent results. Perhaps popularity and peer interactions need to be redefined and looked at from a different perspective.

Peer Delinquency

A major factor that has been identified by Baldry and Farrington (2000) as having highly significant impact on a child’s bullying behavior is delinquent activity. They hypothesized that, because delinquency and bullying lead to the same underlying construct (antisocial personality), bullying and delinquency would be significantly positively correlated (Baldry, & Farrington). It was surprising when the results showed that there was not a positive correlation all of the time. Only 15-30% of the boys who were classified as bullies committed serious delinquent acts (Baldry, & Farrington). Even though Baldry and Farrington considered this to be a low number in comparison to what they had expected, 15-30% is still a large proportion of self-reports of delinquency. Therefore, even though Baldry and Farrington considered the correlation to be rather weak, it may be important to replicate the study. Furthermore, the 15-30% of individuals who did report delinquency should be taken seriously and delinquency may actually serve as one of many possible predictive factors of bullying. Lastly, how is this related to peer groups? If the child is involved with peers who are engaging in delinquent acts, the child may also be more likely to engage in delinquency and in turn gradually take steps toward becoming a bully. Therefore, not only is it important that future studies reexamine delinquency of the individual, but also delinquency of each individual’s peer group.

Prosocial Behavior

Prosocial behavior is another factor that has been considered within both the peer and individual contexts. Baldry and Farrington (2000) again are credited with investigating this important factor. In essence, prosocial behavior is the polar opposite of bullying behavior. Prosocial behavior, according to Baldry and Farrington, is the demonstration of compassion and constructive involvement with other children. When a child uses prosocial behavior it may be in time of crisis or in time of relative peace (Baldry, & Farrington). What is important is that prosocial behavior does not include aggression (Baldry, & Farrington). Baldry and Farrington felt that prosocial behavior would be a strong indication that a child would not engage in bullying behavior. As expected, they found that bullies tended to score lower on the scale of prosocial behavior. It is not surprising that those children who are better equipped with social behavior will be less likely to become involved in school violence, especially as bullies. However, when the children do not have command over interacting with others, they will be much more likely to engage in bullying behavior (Baldry, & Farrington).

Peer Influence

Despite the uncertainty of whether peers choose bullies as friends, or whether bullies are created after a new person joins a group of bullies, there have been strong suggestions that negative peer interactions are correlated with bullying behavior (Espelage et al., 200; Haynie et al., 2001). Haynie et al., in their cross-sectional study, defined negative peer influences of deviance. The children who were involved as subjects had to self-report how many of their friends were involved in delinquent activities,
such as fighting, stealing, bullying, and lying (Haynie et al.). The results that Haynie et al. obtained suggested that there was a strong correlation between bullying behavior and deviant peer influence. Again using a cross-sectional design, Espelage et al. considered negative peer influences, hypothesizing that there would be a positive correlation between bullying and negative peer influences. The results obtained by Espelage et al. indicated a positive correlation between the two variables. The more the child bullied, the more likely he was to have friends who engaged in deviant behavior in the past thirty days (Espelage et al.). It is not clear whether the subjects chose deviant peers, or if the subjects were shaped into participating in deviant acts. Haynie et al. suggested that this relationship be considered in later longitudinal research.

In closing, bullies tend to fee off of each other. Delinquency (Baldry, Et Farrington, 2000), prosocial behavior (Baldry, & Farrington), loneliness (Nansel et al., 2000), and social networks (Salmivalli et al., 1998) are all associated with bullying behavior.

School Environment

What a child experiences at school in terms of academic achievement and the overall sense of school security can influence bullying behavior as well. O’Moore and Kirkham (2001) considered both intellectual and school status as factors influencing bullying behavior. They found that children who bullied at the highest frequency also felt less adequate in terms of intellectual and school status (O’Moore, & Kirkham). Due to the fact that O’Moore and Kirkham measured attitudes toward intellect and to school status, it was highlighted overall that the bullies’ attitudes toward these two factors was significantly low. Bosworth et al. (1999) considered a similar variable that they called school sense of belonging. They found that subjects who bullied more frequently also possessed a significantly lower sense of belonging at school in comparison to victims and those not involved. These are the only two studies thus far that have examined the child’s attitude toward school and fitting in. Perhaps more studies should look at the relationship between sense of belonging and security at school and bullying behavior. It could be possible that bullies, with a dampened sense of the overall world, feel that school is not the place for them, and in turn take

our their anger on the children who are vulnerable.

Individual Characteristics

Many researchers have examined internal personality and psychological aspects of the subjects as possible predictors of bullying behavior. The variables have included feelings of depression (Bosworth et al., 1999; Haynie et al., 2001), self-esteem (Salmivalli et al., 1999; Baldry, & Farrington, 2000; O’Moore, & Kirkham, 2001), and different personality dimensions (Kumpulainen et al., 1998; Mynard, & Joseph, 1997).

Depression

Haynie et al. (2001) as well as Bosworth et al. (1999) considered feelings of depression as a contributor to bullying behavior. Haynie et al. used the Weinberger Adjustment Inventory, whereas Bosworth et al. employed the University of Texas Depression Scale. Despite the use of different scales, both Bosworth et al. and Haynie et al. found that feelings of depression were significantly related to bullying behavior. It is not clear whether the bullying causes the depression or if depression causes bullying, but there is a correlation between the two variables. Therefore, further longitudinal investigation may be needed in order to determine the direction of the relationship between the two variables.

Self-Esteem

Salmivalli et al. (1999), Baldry and Farrington (2000), and O’Moore and Kirkham (2001) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and bullying behavior. Each study used a different scale to measure self-esteem, and consequently obtained inconsistent results. O’Moore and Kirkham used the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. Baldry and Farrington used an adapted version of the West and Farrington (1973) scale, as cited in Baldry and Farrington. And, Salmivalli et al. used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. According to Salmivalli et al., bullies did not score extremely high or extremely low on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, indicating that a relationship did not exist. This may be due to the fact that bullies are still able to maintain friendships, or that they have grandiose ideologies of themselves because they are able to push people around (Salmivalli et al.). On a different note, O’Moore and Kirkham revealed a negative relationship where low global self-esteem was related significantly to bullying behavior. Lastly, Baldry and Farrington found that
there was no relationship between bullying behavior and self-esteem. The discrepancy across all three of the experiments could be due to the differences within the instruments used; furthermore the problem could also lie in the fact that operational definitions were distinctly different.

**Personality Traits**

The final set of predictor variables for bullying behavior are personality variables. Mynard and Joseph (1997) focused on the different personality types presented by Eysenck, whereas Kumpulainen et al. (1998) considered psychological variables such as internalizing versus externalizing behavior. Mynard and Joseph (1997) found that those individuals who scored higher on the bullying behavior scale also scored highly on neuroticism and psychoticism scales. Mynard and Joseph (1997) suggest that this is a significant difference between bullies and the non-involved group and the bullies' demonstration of neuroticism and psychoticism may actually allow early detection of potential bullying behavior. Kumpulainen et al. defined bullying under the category of externalizing behavior. Externalizing behaviors were defined as fighting, being disobedient, lying, irritability, and temper tantrums. Victimization was akin to internalizing behaviors, which were defined as worrying, being fussy, being fearful, being miserable, and irritability. It was found that those subjects who were classified as bullies scored relatively highly on the externalizing factor, but did not score notably on internalizing behavior. Because bullying behavior is defined by externalizing behaviors such as fighting, intimidating, or scaring another child, it is not surprising that the results came to be the way they were. Externalizing versus internalizing is an interesting predictor of bullying behavior and should be replicated to check for reliability.

**PREDICTIVE FACTORS OF VICTIMIZATION BEHAVIOR**

**Family Environment**

**Parent-Child Relationships**

Like bullying behavior, victimization behavior can be shaped by the socialization that occurs within a child's family (Finnegan, Hodges, & Perry, 1998; Ladd, & Ladd, 1998; Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1997). Finnegan et al. examined the mother-child interaction in an effort to determine if "perceived maternal behavior predicted victimization" (p. 1082). Finnegan et al. found that maternal over-protectiveness resulted in a significant positive relationship with boys' victimization behavior. It was theorized that maternal over-protectiveness would prohibit young boys' development of autonomy (Finnegan et al.). Not allowing the boys to become autonomous placed the boys at higher risk for victimization because making one's own decisions was not emphasized and the boys had not been taught how to defend themselves (Finnegan et al.). They had been taught to conform and submit. The inability to deal with conflict appropriately may lead to internalization behaviors because the children have been forbidden to speak out or are afraid to do so. Thus, making them easier targets for victimization after each consecutive attack (Finnegan et al.). For females on the other hand, maternal threat of rejection was the variable that correlated most significantly with a girl's victimization (Finnegan et al.). Finnegan et al. predicted that threat of rejection could lead to victimization because it does not allow the girls to focus on fostering the development of communal behaviors such as "empathy, sharing, cooperation, and play caregiving" (p. 1084). Girls are expected to show and utilize communal behaviors and if they fail to do so they run the risk of being rejected by peers. Peer rejection will leave the child alone and vulnerable to victimization. The early experiences that a child has with his/her mother according to Finnegan et al. will affect the child's peer relationships in the future, which may in turn affect their victimization status.

Ladd and Ladd (1998) also examined children's relationships with their parents. However, Ladd and Ladd considered parenting behavior in the context of parent-child relationships. Both parenting behaviors, intrusive demandingness and parental responsiveness, were correlated significantly with victimization behavior, confirming the predictions that Ladd and Ladd presented. Simply instructing and demanding that the child perform in a desired manner defined parental intrusive demandingness; the child was not allowed to question the parent's reasoning (Ladd, & Ladd). Since the children were not allowed to critically analyze or discuss their ideas with their parents, children will become dependent upon authority and will not know how to cope with confrontation
on a mutual level when it arises (Ladd, & Ladd). This is similar to what Baumrind (1971) would predict of children raised by authoritarian parents. In essence, authoritarian parenting style is what is being analyzed with intrusive demandingness.

Ladd and Ladd (1998) found that parental responsiveness was also significantly correlated to victimization behavior. Parental responsiveness was defined as parents who reason, analyze, and mutually discuss issues with their children (Ladd, & Ladd). Parents who scored high on the parental responsiveness scale responded with warmth and guidance (Ladd, & Ladd). This result is similar to the authoritative parent that is presented in Baumrind’s (1971) model of parenting styles. The emphasis on parental involvement, and moreover, the type of involvement, has been suggested as being highly important in victimization incidence (Ladd, & Ladd). This research, conducted by Ladd and Ladd, further supports the initial contentions made by Baumrind (1971) in regards to parenting styles. Parents who do not have a stable balance between control and warmth seem to put their children at greater risk rather than providing them with protection (Baumrind).

Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, and Bates (1997) examined early physical abuse as a predictive factor for victimization behavior. Most research has focused on victims as being passive recipients of bullying; however, out of recent literature the aggressive victim has emerged (Schwartz et al.). Aggressive victims are those individuals who are victims of bullying behavior, but who are easily angered and/or provoked (Schwartz et al.). Furthermore, they run and even-higher risk of being rejected because peers see them as being unable to control their violent outbursts (Schwartz et al.). Schwartz et al. wanted to uncover the possible relationship between aggressive victims and early socialization that occurs within the family. Schwartz et al. thought that aggressive victim scores would be correlated with violence exposure in the home, as well as experiencing physical abuse directly. The results demonstrated that those boys who had been physically abused had a 29% rate of aggressive victimization, as compared to the 14% that the non-abused boys demonstrated. Furthermore, aggressive victimization status was highly correlated with exposure to violence in the home. Schwartz et al. suggested that their research could have produced more strongly significant results if they had used one-tailed instead of two-tailed tests. A stronger correlation could have existed, but was not elicited because of the statistical problem.

Finnegan et al. (1998), Ladd and Ladd (1998) and Schwartz et al. (1997) have demonstrated that the relationships that children develop early in their lives, beginning in the home, can influence later behavior. Even though none of the researchers stated that they were examining parenting styles as defined by Baumrind (1971), Finnegan et al. (1998), Ladd and Ladd (1998) and Schwartz et al. (1997) research were consistent with her typologies.

Peer Environment

Number and Type of Friends

Peer environment, another important socialization institution, can also shape the patterns and behavior of victims (Furlong, Chung, Bates, & Morrison, 1995; Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997; Hodges, & Perry, 1999). Hodges et al. anticipated social risk as being a predictor of victimization behavior. Social risk, as defined by Hodges et al., is the lack of supportive friends or being rejected by the peer group. Hodges et al. examined social risk from two different perspectives. They first focused on whether or not low social risk could help decrease the relationship between behavioral risk (internalizing, externalizing, and physical strength) and victimization. Results demonstrated that the number of friends a child had was negatively correlated with victimization (Hodges et al.). Additionally, the child’s reports of internalization and externalization decreased as the child’s number of friends increased (Hodges et al., 1997). The number of friends was then analyzed in terms of how supportive they were (Hodges et al.). Peer support moderated the subjects’ behavioral variables and in turn decreased victimization. Hodges et al. found the same to be true for being rejected by peers. As the subjects scored higher on the peer rejection scale, they would concurrently score higher on the victimization scale (Hodges et al.). Social support seems to be a buffer or a type of protection against victimization. The more friends the child has and the more supportive those friends are, the less likely it is that a child will be victimized because there are others who will defend them if a bully tries to attack. But,
if the child either lacks friends, or has friends who are not supportive and friends who are also victims, the social support may act as a magnet rather than a buffer for them to be victims of bullying.

In another study conducted by Hodges and Perry, the researchers again examined the number of reported and reciprocated friendships, but examined peer rejection in more detail. Hodges and Perry, in response to their own suggestion for longitudinal research, used such a design to examine the relationships between victims and their peers. Hodges and Perry believed that those children who fell into the victim range would fare relatively high on peer rejection and low on number of friends. They assumed that there would be a relationship between these variables because (a) children who are unfriendly tend to be supported less by peers, (b) without peer support, one is more likely to be an easy target, and (c) bullies rationalize their behavior against victims assuming that no one cares or will intervene to help the victim because the victim is not liked. Besides affecting the peer rejection variable, number of friends did not significantly influence victimization. On the other hand, peer rejection turned out to be a strong predictor of victimization (Hodges, & Perry). Even when multiple regression analyses were conducted, and other possible contributing factors, such as internalizing and externalizing behaviors were controlled, peer rejection still maintained a high correlation with victimization behavior. Hodges and Perry suggested that victimization may occur because (a) the bullies do not feel they will be socially rejected if they pick on a victim, (b) since the victim is highly rejected, s/he is likely to be alone and without support, and (c) the victims do not realize how to deal with bullies properly and therefore succumb to the abuse. Then, once these victims are seen as easy targets, they will be available each time the bully attacks.

Furlong et al. (1995) suggests that because victims are repeatedly targeted they may actually fail to make, or maintain poor, connections to peers. Furlong et al. hypothesized that victims would have poor social support networks. Peer connections correlated significantly with the victim variable. Consistent with other research (Hodges et al., 1997; Hodges, & Perry, 1999), Furlong et al. found that 8% of the individuals who were categorized as multi-victims reported having no friends compared to the 1.1% of non-victims who reported having no friends. As was suggested by Hodges et al. (1997) the lack of social support can leave children more susceptible to bullying because they are always alone and no one truly enjoys spending time with them.

Collectively, Hodges et al. (1997), Hodges and Perry (1999) and Furlong et al. (1995), found that peer rejection and lack of supportive friends predisposes a child to victimization. Despite their different methodological approaches, they all found that peer rejection, and/or lack of supportive social networks leaves a child alone and as a target.

School Environment
Perceived Campus Safety

Furlong et al. (1995), in addition to considering peer rejection as predictive of peer victimization, also considered the subjects’ perceptions about school safety. Furlong et al. expected that individuals who were categorized as multi-victims would likewise report low levels of school belonging. This was hypothesized on the basis that multi-victims are repeatedly attacked without help from anyone. If these children know they are entering a danger zone without any support, it makes sense why they would report negative attitudes toward school belonging. The results presented by Furlong et al. suggests that 24% of multi-victims reported low levels of school belonging as well as 38.9% reporting low levels of overall perceived school safety. The victims of bullying are afraid to go to school because they know they will be hurt either physically or emotionally and they want to avoid that pain.

Ethnicity

Hanish and Guerra (2000) considered racial factors to be important in the victimization on school campuses. Hanish and Guerra considered Hispanic, African-American, and White children in their study of ethnicity and victimization. They found that White children were more likely to be victimized when they attended ethnically diverse schools or, schools that were predominantly Hispanic or African-American. Overall, Hispanic children reported the lowest frequency of victimization, whereas Whites and African-Americans scored higher than Hispanics, but relatively equal in comparison to one another (Hanish, & Guerra). Due to the lack of literature on ethnicity as a predictor of who is involved in
bullying and victimization, Hanish and Guerra formulated their hypotheses around general crime statistics. Hanish and Guerra predicted that African-American children would be more likely to be victimized because they tend to be penalized for crimes on the streets more often than any other racial group. This prediction was not confirmed and the reasons why the results came out the way they did is somewhat vague. More research needs to be conducted in this area before conclusive statements can be made. Because of the lack of support for the researchers' predictions, they were unable to justify why their results appeared as they did.

The Individual Attitudes about Violence

Vernberg, Jacobs, and Hershberger (1999) examined whether subjects who reported attitudes supportive of violence would score higher in comparison to subjects who reported attitudes not supportive of violence in terms of victimization. Vernberg et al. thought that children who tended to have attitudes supportive of violence would report higher rates of victimization. Results showed that those individuals who had higher rates of reported victimization had positive attitudes of violence (Vernberg et al.). In other words, victims thought aggression was an acceptable method of dealing with controversy (Vernberg et al.). This could be possible because the child has seen aggression modeled in the home and thus thinks it is acceptable. Or, the child’s attitudes of violence may justify their own victimization. Victims may rationalize their own predicament by attributing the attack to be his/her own behavior. It is possible that the victim believes that s/he did something to provoke the aggression and that the aggression was an appropriate means of dealing with the problem the victim caused.

Depression

From a different internal, individual, perspective, Slee (1995) examined depression as a predictor for victimization. Slee predicted that children who scored high on the depression scale would also score high on the victimization scale. This was in fact the case. A relationship also existed between clinical symptomology and victimization. Victims scored higher on the Depression Self Rating Scale exhibiting clinical depressive symptomology 17% of the time (Slee). It is possible that depression is a predictor of victimization because if a child does not interact with other children, or is irritable due to symptomology, peers may perceive this behavior as unnecessary or weird. With this rationalization they may then feel justified in hurting the victim because the victim doesn’t fit in and won’t stand up for him/herself. The recurring victimization that the child experiences may then lead to lifelong depression, as an effect of the bullying s/he experienced (Slee).

All together, individual factors can affect a child greatly (Vernberg et al., 1999; Slee 1995). Each victim may experience bullying differently or be predisposed to bullying based on personal factors. If two children are identical in a family and both lack peer support, it is possible that if one is depressed and the other is not, this additional individual variable may affect the child’s coping abilities. In other words, individual factors may affect coping in all other areas: family, peers, and school. If the child is unable to cope with the stresses of all of these institutions, the pressure from all of them may build up and cause them to be easy targets.

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this literature review was to examine different predictive factors of bullying and victimization that have been identified by recent research, so as to be one step closer to some sort of intervention. By considering the theoretical framework presented by Baumrind (1970) different predictive factors have demonstrated ideas that either were directly stated and related to the parenting style framework, or the relationship was inferred. Connections have been made between how specific agencies, family, peers, school, and the individual all contribute to correlational research, cause and effect relationships cannot be determined with full certainty. However, with repeated findings, it is possible to support contentions that some variables did have significant predictive abilities in relation to bullying and victimization.

Bullying Factors

According to the research, access to guns (Bosworth et al., 1999), parenting styles (Baldry, & Farrington, 2000; Bowers et al., 1994; Espelage et al., 2000; Nansel et al., 2001), and parental involvement (Curtner-Smith, 2000; Espelage et al., 2000; Nansel et al., 2001) social networks
peer and self delinquent activity (Baldry and Farrington, 2000), social isolation (Nansel et al., 2000) and prosocial (Baldry and Farrington, 2000) were factors that existed within the family and were significantly related to bullying behavior. Specifically, high access to guns, punitive parenting styles, and low parental involvement, poor social networks, high peer and self delinquency, high social isolation and low prosocial behavior were all related to increased bullying behavior.

Victimization Behavior

Factors that were significantly predictive of victimization behavior were poor parent child interactions (Finnegan et al., 1998; Ladd, & Ladd, 1998; Schwartz et al., 1997), peer rejection and poor social support networks (Furlong et al., 1995; Hodges, et al., 1997; Hodges, & Perry, 1999), perceptions of unsafe schools (Furlong et al., 1995), ethnicity (Hanish & Guerra, 2000), attitudes about violence (Vernberg et al., 1999), and depression (Slee, 1995).

Overall, there have been several studies conducted in this area, and it would be useful to examine the relationships between all of these variables to see if they can be compiled into an even more condensed list to possibly provide educators with means of preventing these acts of school violence.

REFERENCES


