A History of Bullying

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Abstract: This article attempts to expose us to the history of bullying behavior in schools.

The review was done to increase the knowledge of bullying in terms of past experiences, and broaden perspectives of bullying in the schools and the effectiveness of prevention programs. Review of the literature encompassed the years 1970-to present.

Social media and mass broadcasting has brought inordinate attention to an issue that has been prominent for centuries. Bullying is not a novel ideal from this century but a phenomenon that has been occurring since recorded history. The Bible is riddled with references to violence festered by the spirit of bullying. Specific examples include Cain and Abel, the rivalry of Joseph and his brothers, David and Goliath, and the parable of the Good Samaritan. Christians were bullied and persecuted in the Roman Coliseum by Saul the first noted bully of the Christian Church. Literature in the 19th and 20th centuries also depicted the social nature of bullying through the works of Hughes (1857) *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and Golding (1954) *Lord of the Flies*. Other modern era tragic incidences of bullying include the 1999 Columbine High School massacre, the hazing of a Florida A&M band student, the suicides of Phoebe Prince and Ryan Halligan, and most recently the Miami Dolphin's Richie Incognito incident all which point to the sustained existence of bullying.

The purpose of this study is to increase the knowledge of bullying in terms of past experiences, and broaden perspectives of bullying in the schools and the effectiveness of prevention programs. The study will first indicate how the definition of the term "bullying" has evolved over the centuries, and focus on three specific types of bullying; direct bullying, indirect bullying and cyberbullying. The study will then look to the social impact bullying has had, most notably in the school setting and the inception of prevention programs, from pre – 1800 to modern times.

The definition of bullying has evolved over time and is now inclusive of cyberbullying which no longer limits bullying to the school yard or workplace. Antiquated definitions for a positive sense of the word *bully* ranged from "sweetheart", "fine fellow" and "blusterer" (1530s through 17th century). An 1864 U.S. slang "*bully for you*!" preserved this positivity, however, the meaning waned to that of a 1680s version "harasser of the weak" (Harper, 2015), and have links to the Dutch and French word *boel* meaning "false talk, fraud," or "deception, trick, scheming, intrigue." According to Harper there also was a verb *bull* meaning "to mock, cheat," which dates from 1530s and "push through roughly," 1884.

Although there is no empirical consensus on the definition for bullying, literature points to several key characteristics of bullying including "the deliberate intention to harm another individual; repetition of the bullying behavior over time; and an imbalance of power, such that the victim has difficulty defending him- or herself effectively" (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008, p. 1). Slee (2003) reports that most researchers do agree that bullying is a "destructive form of aggression" (as cited by Cowie, & Jennifer, 2008, p. 2), and that the terms 'bullying' and 'violence' are synonymous. Other descriptive words include coercion, force, silencing, and domination (Consalvo, 2012).

According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (2015) bullying is "unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance," and is repeated over a period of time.   Using power to bullying may include physical strength, or by ridiculing others with intent to control or harm others. Additional researchers, such as Baron (1977), Bandura (1973), and Carlson, Marcus-Newhall, and Miller (1989) define bullying in terms of "aggressive behavior" with intent to harm and as a subset of bullying and school violence (as cited in Koo, 2007).   The most notable definition stems from Olweus (1994), who initiated modern era research on school based peer victimization in the late 70s, which states "Any student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students," and follows three criteria: "(a) It is aggressive behavior or intentional "harm doing" (b) which is carried out "repeatedly and over time" (c) in an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power" (p. 1173). These negative actions indicated in his initial definition may include both verbal and non-verbal occurrences such as threatening, degrading, teasing, hitting, kicking, slapping, pushing, vandalizing property, rude gestures, and making faces (Olweus, 1991).

Olweus, Limber, and Mihalic, (1999) indicate that there are two types of bullying: direct and indirect. Direct bullying, which includes both physical (hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, pushing, and choking) and verbal bullying (name-calling, threatening, teasing, and spreading rumors that are hurtful about another person and verbal actions), tend to occur concurrently (Bohn & Hickey, 2011), whereas, indirect bullying is more psychological in nature such as in spreading rumors, back stabbing, and persuading others to dislike a specific individual (Atlas & Pepler, 1998).   A non-traditional form of direct (verbal) and indirect bullying is cyberbullying which evolved from progressive technology communication advancements.   Cyberbullying is defined as the use of any type of information and communication technology to bully another person such as with cell phones and social media (Poland, 2010). With the exponential growth of communication technologies (Internet, chat rooms, online forums, MySpace, Facebook, and other social media platforms), "bullying has proliferated" (Donegan, 2012, p. 34), and is now no longer confined within the classroom walls, or school grounds. With all types of bullying there is no bias as to gender, age, race, or social groups (Consalvo, 2012), nor is there ethical or culture boundaries.

Origins of Bullying

A commonality among all living species since the beginning of time is a natural survival instinct directly aligned with competition. Herbert Spencer (1864) coined the phrase "Survival of the fittest" paralleling with Charles Darwin's biological theory of natural selection in conjunction with his own economic theories, and is sometimes used to justify laissez-faire economics, war and racism. Survival instincts in aggregation with individual competitive forces have "flowed over into the educational, social, and economical realms" (as cited in Donegan, 2012, p. 34), which is known as a competitive hierarchy, or in capitalist ideological terms "social Darwinism." Donegan contends that capitalistic societies, particularly the U.S. tend to push the belief that success equals wealth, an ideology that instills the message that the rich are superior and identifies bullying as a form of a survival tactic in a competitive capitalistic society. From a very young age, children are inadvertently conditioned to believe this ideology as a way to get ahead especially once the child enters elementary school. Pressures to attend the best colleges or to earn scholarships may lead to such bullying tactics as cheating or spreading rumors about fellow classmates. Other historical factors that have induce bullying practices include informal rite of passage into adulthood rituals, bigotry, religious intolerances, hazing, and sexual identifications. Bullying therefore, as viewed in terms of peer victimization, is symptomatic of these aggressive social interactions, or lack of tolerance for others differences. For the most part, bullying was considered, and in some societies still is, an accepted part of growing up.

For as long as schools have been in existence there have been problems with bullying and peer victimization. According to Orpinas and Home (2006) bullying is considered the "most prevalent form of violence in American schools" (abstract), however, it is not isolated to American soil alone. Bullying and peer victimization, in its many forms, is prevalent in schools worldwide. In the 19th century, bullying was not necessarily the term used to document violent behavior that was permeating in everyday social interactions, nor was it used in systematic research. Examples of the introduction of bullying during the Victorian era were made famous by Thomas Hughes' 1857 novel *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. The novel indicated that bullying was 'unofficially' recognized as a troubling factor in England, and eluded to the destruction it could do, however, it was interpreted with a "misadventure of young schoolboys" mentality and accepted as an appropriate behavior of young boys.

The first 'official' report of bullying, and definition of the term bullying, was introduced by *The Times* in 1862 after the death of a soldier due to a systematic bullying event. At the time, bullying was defined as

> "The bullying propensities of human nature have, generally speaking, these remarkable
> characteristics that they are not wandering, volatile, fluttering, oscillating, unsteady
> appetites, hopping about and changing from one subject to another, but that they settle
> upon someone object and stick close and faithfully and perseveringly to it. They are
> about the most unchangeable thing that this fickle world possesses." (Koo, 2007, p. 109).   Another

incident of a systematic bullying event, and an example of "boys will be boys" perception occurred at the King's School in Cambridge, U.K. in 1885 where a young boy died as a result of bullying by a group of older peers. Although the school council was pressured to investigate the incident by former students and the public, the council still held to the traditional belief that bullying was a normal part of a young boy's life.

Not until the Late 1900's has research conducted by Americans been prevalent in the field of bullying (Mills, et al., 2004), and began after Dan Olweus (1991; 1993) a Norwegian began the study in the subject. At the same time an interest in the same subject of bullying/victims began in Scandinavia (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008). Olweus, a research professor of psychology, in the mid 1970's brought great insight to the problems of bullying, and because of his research, others took notice of the significance in bringing safety back into the schools. His research opened a stark realization that a real underlining problem existed. His creation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) and implementing showed significant reduction of school bullying. This research brought awareness to schools and to the professional community inspiring further development of programs. As well, the definition of bullying was further expanded (Koo, 2007).

During the 1970's Olweus began to clarify his findings, he believed that bullying was not only physical, but might include psychological and that it must be continuous. As well, the imbalance of strength, physical and/or mental (or both), and deliberately inflicting harm to others unprovoked (Olweus, 1991, as cited in Tritt & Duncan, 1997).

Prior to the 1980's, the problem of bullying in the U.S. was not considered a serious event. Bullying was considered the norm or an initiation of rites of passage. However, due to the deaths, violence, and mental health issues was bullying seen as a major problem that needed immediate attention. Those victimized by bullying may suffer from: poor academic performance, low self-esteem, and on occasion take their own life or the life of the bully (Wilson, 2006).

Because of extreme situations as well public awareness laws have been implemented to thwart these behaviors. Close to the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, laws have been implemented placing similar programs in place as the No Child Left Behind Program keeping with school safety. As well, school safety laws must be implemented creating safety for all students with contingency of school funding for further motivation (Edmondson & Zeman, 2001).

With school policies in place and punishment of students reaching their potential, it is observed that extreme cases are still arising. In 1999, Columbine High School experienced the revelation and the truth about bullying as it can surpass the norm and can reach into social networking without school officials knowing the hidden messages. Two students that were described as gifted, brought 50 bombs to school, shot 23 students, and 13 were fatalities, and at the end took their own lives and was all done in the name of being bullied.

In 1982 the newspaper article in Scandinavia revealed that three adolescent boys from Norway had committed suicide due to being bullied by their peers (Olweus, 1993). This tragedy influenced a study that collected data on bully/victims from 140,000 students in 715 schools.

Data concluded that in Norwegian schools 15% percent students were involved in bullying. And of those students 94% were determined as victims as well 6% were considered the bullies (Olweus, 1991).

Other research followed Olweus (1993, 1991) and his work in Scandinavia. Of those researchers Stephenson and Smith (1987) in England discovered that 7% were victims of bullying, 10% were bullying, and 6% were both the victim and bullying. As well, Whitney and Smith (1993) found that 10% of students were victims at least once a week. And Rigby and Slee (1991) in Australia revealed that 10.6% girls and 11% of boys were also victims. Continuing his work, Slee (1995) found that 26% was bullied at least one time a week (as cited in Beaty, & Alexeyev, 2008). Another study by Perry, Kusel, and Perry (1988) revealed bullying in schools in the United States to be near 10% and in Toronto, Canada about 8% (Ziegler & Rosenstein-Manner, 1991). In comparison The National Center for Educational Statistics (2000) states that 29% of schools consider bullying to be the number one discipline problem (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008).

By 2000, bullying in schools has drawn national awareness in many countries around the world. Much attention has caused media attention, written publications, much research, and school interventions, all for the purpose of reducing bullying (Smith, 2000). As researched by Smith (2000), the findings of school interventions have positive implications and revealed future cause and effect.

According to Graham (2011) the problem of bullying has increased in the past ten years in American schools bringing many myths that cause problems and the lack of solving them. Graham (2011), states that there are six myths in clouding the understanding of preventing bullying in schools effectively. According to Rivers (2000), bullying has been an excepted norm for many years, and now it is believed to be something more than a normal childhood progressive development. These developments of children have evolved from being asked to just take the bullying in silence to now standing up against the perpetrator. Rivers (2000) research has included young lesbians, gay men, and bisexual men and women who have been bullied in school and long-term effects.

Technology today with its ease of usage as well as able to be secret has allowed cyber bullying to be an enormous problem. This technology of ambiguous quality has found Donegan (2012) to research case studies, statistical research, law cases, and news articles to comprehend the trials of cyberbullying and reduce cause and effect. Many legal, clinical, and prevention steps were addressed in this article and many future possibilities. Other considerations are that pictures, comments, and secret comments can be left online for an unlimited amount of time (USA Today, 2008). Donegan (2012) believes the ability to be secret and not seeing the response from the bullied gives the bully confidence to produce even harsher blows.

This also gives a platform for the America Online, Incorporated (AOL), Yik Yak, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, My Space, Google+, and Snap Chat to name a few where our youth can have instant communication with each other via the internet, allowing freedom, bravery, sometimes secrecy, and the choice to be assaultive in behavior, where normal face-to-face interaction would not lend itself to such actions (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). According to a study by Pew Research Center, communication at the fingertips of 12-17 year olds are now at 75% owning cell phones and is up from 45% in 2004. And of those owning cell phones one out of three teens sends 3,000 texts per month (Lenhart, Ling, & Campbell, 2010).

One extreme case of cyberbullying was in 2003, a 13 year old boy by the name of Ryan Halligan committed suicide on October 7th. He lived in Vermont, and after being bullied at school took up kick-boxing, but after the taunts moved to the internet he could no longer defend himself and decided to end his life. His father now travels around to schools sharing his story bringing awareness and in May 2004 Vermont adopted a Bully Prevention Policy Law and a Suicide Prevention Law (Act 114) in 2005. John Halligan's case has been cited by legislators in different states for cyberbullying control and California state legislature in August 2008 passed Assembly Bill 86 2008, a law that directly deals with cyberbullying and gives school administrators authority to deal with student discipline for bullying online or offline (*Growing Up Online*, 2008). According to Mills (2004) over the last twenty years much has been learned concerning the bullying revolution and much is to be explored.

The violence occurring in America's young people has become of extreme concern as school shootings have taken place across our land. As stated in the media, bullying was a major contributing factor in these events as it explained the etiology of violence. Feder (2007) stated that these happenings have caused our nation to reevaluate the way we look at bullying, that it is no longer a happening that is just something that causes discomfort, or an initiation rite.

Many factors according to Meehan and Kerig, (2010) should be considered as we reevaluate the way we consider bullying such as: patterns of violence, risk factors, protective factors for the bullies and the bullied, and the manner of causation. These factors pertain to school, dating, gangs, sexual violence, family violence, and the workplace bullying (Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt, & Lemme, 2006).

Conclusion

Before 1970 researchers paid little attention to bullying. With the research of F. L. Burk and Dan Olweus start to make bullying an issue in Norway, but not until the 1990s does the United States consider bullying an issue due to a string of massacres in schools. Dan Olweus publishes *Bullying: What we know and what we can do about it*. By 2004 schools have adopted anti-bullying programs and 16 states pass anti-bullying laws by 2004.

According to Shaver (2013) the description of bullying from the 18th to 20th century documents has evolved from that of having to do with death, extreme abandonment, or a form of blackmail in children of school age, including bigger boys mistreating smaller ones. Shaver (2013) sees definitions have also changed due to expanding of subsets: cyberbullying, disability bullying, gay bullying, legal bullying, military bullying, parental bullying, prison bullying, school bullying, sexual bullying, institutional bullying, workplace bullying (including-academia, blue collar jobs, information technology, medicine, nursing, teaching), and other areas.

The methodology of bullying offenses has seen change to include: physical, verbal, mental, or any avenue to show empowerment over the victim, and are often seen in direct (physical or verbal) or indirect contact (gossiping, social media/cyberbullying, rumors). As social media expands school administration will have to stay on top of the latest trends to be aware of negative happenings as it pertains to their schools.

While bullying has changed from the 1800's; there is still major work to be done on implementing solutions, identifying problems, having procedures in place, and educators educated correctly. School security, holding bullies accountable for their actions, and making our schools a safer place for our children have taken on greater effort. However, the authors believe these concerns are still in the trial and error stages of implementation.

A key hurdle to solving the problem of bullying is the need to change the attitude of the populace. Often, it's dismissed as a rite of passage, mere "bugging" or a way to build character (Gelpi, 2009). This attitude includes a perception that sports builds character and hazing are acceptable. This "sport builds character" and the rituals associated explains the longevity and its legitimacy (Rees, 2010).

It seems that since schools began there has been a problem with bullying. In no way, at any time since the 1990's due to school murders and suicides been supported by school personnel, adults, parents, or even other students, but too often the offenses are overlooked and sometimes ignored while children are being bullying. Educators and students are often in denial about school bullying.(Gelpi, 2009). It may be said, we are preparing for a future that we know nothing about.

Bullying behavior has become a common feature, and a major, major concern in schools in America and all over the world. It is a worrisome practice in schools because it infringes on the child's right to human dignity, privacy, freedom and security. The physical, emotional and educational consequences of bullying behavior can never be underestimated (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaida, 2008).

There is no single factor for an individual to become a victim (Adams, & Lawrence, 2011) and therefore it may be said, we have still not heeded history in preparing for a future that we still know nothing about.

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