Chapter 21
Bullying as a Form of Abuse: Conceptualization and Prevention

Amanda B. Nickerson, Amanda Breese, and Jean M. Alberti

Historical Context

Bullying is not a new concept but rather a phenomenon that has been happening since recorded history (Allanson et al., 2015; Koo, 2007). The word "bully" was first recorded in the 1530s (Donegan, 2012), originally with positive connotations with definitions ranging from "sweetheart" to "fine fellow" (Allanson et al., 2015). It was not until the 1680s that "bully" was given the negative definition of "harasser of the weak" (Allanson et al., 2015). Since the change in definition, bullying has become ingrained in American society as a rite of passage, or just a part of growing up (Alberti, 2001; Allanson et al., 2015; Donegan, 2012). In order to address bullying, it is important to understand its historical context and its conceptualization.

School bullying has been well studied in many European and Asian countries since the early seventeenth century (Koo, 2007). In Asian countries like Korea and Japan, bullying has been well documented since the early seventeenth century. Bullying in Korea, or "myunsinrae," was first documented in writings from the Chosun Dynasty in the 1300s (Williams, 2014). Mostly seen in the military between new and superior officers, "myunsinrae" is an overt form of bullying to make a victim feel shame through physical and psychological insults (Koo, 2007). Common forms of "myunsinrae" or "playing invisible coat" include: hitting a victim with sticks, painting their faces with dirt, and riding the victim as if they were a horse (Koo, 2007). "Myunsinrae" lacked information or punishment until the sixth king of

A. B. Nickerson (✉) · A. Breese
Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, Buffalo, NY, USA
e-mail: nickersa@buffalo.edu

J. M. Alberti
Alberti Psychological Services, Glen Ellyn, NY, USA

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the Chosun Dynasty died by suicide after having endured "myunsinrae" for over a year (Williams, 2014).

Bullying in Japan, "ijime," has been documented as early as 1603 (Koo, 2007). Japan is the only nation in Asia where bullying is well studied (Koo, 2007). "Ijime" takes the form of psychological isolation rather than physical harm or injury, the most common form being ostracism (Sakai, 1985; Koo, 2007). Often "ijime" was seen as a form of parenting or punishment. Common forms of punishment include: child isolation, familial separation, and threats to abandon the child (Sakai, 1985). The belief behind these punishments is that the child would learn how to survive through the punishment. The tradition of "ijime" quickly moved into school classrooms where teachers and staff would encourage the children to ostracize others who were acting strange in an effort to teach assimilation (Williams, 2014). In the mid-1980s, "ijime" became the biggest social problem featured in the media (Koo, 2007). In 1986, newspapers and television shows presented the public with nine incidents of students' suicide notes which detailed their need for help with "ijime" (Naito & Gielen, 2005). Between 1985 and 1998, more than 1200 academic papers and over 400 books were written on "ijime" (Takatoku, 1999).

In the early nineteenth century, the United Kingdom considered the violence of bullying to be private, or a matter between individuals rather than the focus of national attention (Koo, 2007). However, toward the end of the nineteenth century, bullying began to gain national attention with *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes (Koo, 2007). Hughes' novel contains one of the first examples of bullying within UK schools and enlightened the general public about the violence that can occur in schools. The novel was widely read, which led to heated public debates and conjured repugnance toward and disapproval of bullying behaviors (Horton, 2014; Rigby et al., 2004; Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013).

In the United States before the early twentieth century, bullying was only considered to be physical harassment in school children, commonly seen as strong boys being cruel to weak ones (Koo, 2007). The first known academic article to address bullying was written in 1897 by Frederic Burk at Clark University (Koo, 2007). Burk's article surveyed 156 school-aged children from a New Jersey school about their experiences with teasing and bullying, revealing around 1120 instances of bullying (Burk, 1897). Attention toward bullying and violence began to shift during World War II when the press coverage of the war increased the American people's awareness of crimes against the dignity of life when (Koo, 2007). The war helped to change the American people's perception of the treatment and acceptable behavior of others, including the human right to be free from violence and aggression (Koo, 2007; Williams, 2014).

While some school bullying research in the United States was conducted as early as 1885, it did not gain traction until the early 1970s in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia (Burk, 1897; Horton & Forsberg, 2015). Early Scandinavian research centered on the subset of bullying termed mobbing, or the collective behavior of harassing a victim (Koo, 2007; Monks & Coyne, 2011). The term mobbing, used originally to describe a group of birds that attack an individual, was adopted to describe the violence seen among school-aged youth (Monks & Coyne, 2011). Dan

Olweus, a leading figure in bullying research, used the term mobbing as his early research focused on children attacking individuals (Allanson et al., 2015; Monks & Coyne, 2011), including a systematic study he conducted in 1973 (Allanson et al., 2015). However, Olweus later realized that bullying between individuals was more common than mobbing behavior (Monks & Coyne, 2011). Olweus' research shifted and the term "bullying" became more prevalent in research and publications (Monks & Coyne, 2011). His work is considered to be the pioneering research on bullying. In 1993, Olweus provided the first widely used definition of bullying (Allanson et al., 2015; Koo, 2007). A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself (Olweus, 1993). Currently, the term "mobbing" is more closely related to the mistreatment by colleagues in the workplace (Seo et al., 2012). Olweus also developed the first comprehensive school-wide bullying prevention program in Norway called the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus, 1993), discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

In the late 1990s, after a string of massacres in schools, bullying became a more urgent issue in the United States (Allanson et al., 2015). In 1999 at Columbine High School, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold murdered twelve students and one teacher, which became the second most-covered news event of the decade (Larkin, 2009). The massacre evoked national outrage, sparking debates and awareness on bullying, school violence, and mental health issues because the perpetrators were reportedly bullied and rejected by their peers (Koo, 2007; Larkin, 2009). Due to the national attention that Columbine drew, school bullying came to be viewed as a public health epidemic and a threat to all students which spurred zero-tolerance and the criminalization of bullying (Cohen & Brooks, 2014).

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, bullying in schools had drawn national attention and awareness in the United States and around the world (Allanson et al., 2015). For example, similar to the United States, South Korea began studying bullying in the early 2000s after a number of suicides that were linked to bullying (Slee & Skrzypiec, 2016).

After the Columbine massacre, many schools across the country began instituting zero-tolerance policies toward bullying and school violence (Larkin, 2009). Prior to this time, teachers advised victims to tell an adult, walk away or tell the bully to stop (Elledge et al., 2010a), but by 2004, many schools adopted anti-bullying programs and sixteen states had passed anti-bullying laws (Allanson et al., 2015). Since the Columbine massacre, peer victimization and mental health moved to the forefront of attention in the United States, with corresponding legislation and prevention approaches discussed later in this chapter. In recent years, bullying has come to be considered the most prevalent form of violence in American schools (Allanson et al., 2015).

Cyberbullying is the newest form of bullying to be recognized. Due to the increase in popularity of the Internet and social media platforms, cyberbullying is at the forefront of national focus and research (Donegan, 2012; Langos, 2012). Cyberbullying was brought into mainstream focus after the online harassment resulted in multiple teen suicides (Donegan, 2012). In October 2006, Megan Meier,

a thirteen-year-old from Missouri, died by suicide that was later attributed to cyberbullying. Meier's former friend created a fake account on MySpace, a popular social media platform of the time, to gather information about Meier which was going to be used to later humiliate her (Pokin, 2007). The former friend created the fake account under the name "Josh Evans" and was originally meant as a "joke" (Donegan, 2012). However, in October, the tone of the messages from "Josh" turned sinister with one reading, "[t]he world would be a better place without you" (Pokin, 2007). Megan's story caught national attention and sparked outrage after county prosecutors decided not to file any criminal charges in relation to cyberbullying. In 2008, the Missouri State Legislature voted to criminalize using the Internet to harass someone, and is now known as "Megan's Law." This was one of the first comprehensive cyberbullying and cyberstalking state laws passed to protect youth and adults from online harassment on social media platforms.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), recognizing bullying as a major public health issue, convened a working group to develop a uniform definition as "any unwanted aggressive behavior that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance that inflicts physical, psychological, social or emotional harm or distress on a targeted youth" (Gladden et al., 2014). The CDC currently recognizes two modes of bullying and four types of bullying (Gladden et al., 2014). A mode of bullying (direct or indirect) is how the aggressive behavior is experienced by the victim. Direct bullying is aggressive behavior that occurs in the presence of the victim (Allanson et al., 2015; Gladden et al., 2014). Indirect bullying is aggressive behavior that is not directly communicated to the victim (Gladden et al., 2014). The types of bullying include: physical, verbal, relational, and damage to property. Physical bullying is defined as the use of physical force by the perpetrator against the target which includes hitting, kicking, and punching (Gladden et al., 2014). Verbal bullying is oral or written communication that causes harm like taunting and inappropriate sexual comments (Gladden et al., 2014). Relational bullying includes behaviors constructed to harm the relationships or reputations of another like spreading rumors and making derogatory comments (Gladden et al., 2014).

Cyberbullying is formally defined as "the willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014). Colette Langos (2012) suggests the two following definitions: (a) "cyberbullying is bullying transposed on a technological platform, and (b) "cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to carry out a series of acts as in the case of direct cyberbullying, or as an act as in the case of indirect cyberbullying, intending to harm another who cannot easily defend his/herself." Although cyberbullying is difficult to define, it shares several commonalities with traditional bullying like existing as direct and/or indirect, and repetition as a key criterion (Langos, 2012).

Theories of Bullying

In order to better understand the phenomenon of bullying, many theories have been developed. Several theories focus on bullying as a learned behavior that is reinforced within their larger social contexts. Children often learn to use violence as a way to handle interpersonal problems (Alberti, 2001; Donegan, 2012), which may be modeled after and reinforced in the home, school, and larger society (e.g., media). In a school setting, students learn corrupt tactics (e.g., spreading social rumors, pressuring others for assignments) to get ahead in the highly competitive educational environment; if they are reinforced (e.g., becoming more popular, getting better grades), then they may become a habit (Donegan, 2012). Media influence and exposure to violence can reinforce children's learned behaviors (Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008) by providing a model for youth to follow (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and enabling a perpetrator to justify their behaviors as a legitimate mode of problem-solving (Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008). There is ample evidence that other forms of abuse and violence are also learned behaviors (Bauman & Yoon, 2014; Bergman & Brismar, 1994; Fitch & Papantonio, 1983; Kruger & Valltos, 2002). We next review several theories on the motivation for bullying behaviors, which can be considered as falling broadly as focusing on learning and social cognitions; social capital, power, and dominance; and social-ecological theory.

Learning and Social Cognitive Theories

The social cognitive theory of bullying is based on Albert Bandura's work indicating that individuals learn behaviors through direct observations and the consequences that follow (Bandura, 1977; Swearer et al., 2014). Social cognitive theory suggests that individuals tend to avoid behaviors that are believed they will be punished for, and instead, engage in behaviors that will be rewarded (Bandura, 1977; Swearer et al., 2014). Youth learn social behavior like violence and aggression through observational learning (Bandura, 1977; Bandura et al., 1961), including watching violent media. In Bandura's classic Bobo doll experiment, some children were exposed to an adult model who acted aggressively (e.g., hitting, punching) toward a Bobo doll. After a period of time, the children were left alone with the doll, and those who were exposed to the aggressive model were more likely to also show aggressive behaviors toward the doll (Bandura, 1977). The results suggest that children can learn and then display aggressive or violent behaviors, like bullying, through mere observation, which can occur at home, in school, and in their neighborhoods.

Therefore, according to the social cognitive theory of bullying, those who engage in bullying behaviors have the belief that they will be rewarded (Swearer et al., 2014). An offshoot of social cognitive theory is moral disengagement (MD) theory. MD posits that bullying perpetrators' behavior is linked to their moral

understanding of the consequences of the behavior (Hymel & Bonanno, 2014). Indeed, researchers have shown that MD was significantly related to bullying and aggressive behaviors (Gini et al., 2014).

Social Capital, Power, and Dominance Theories

These theories are closely related to Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection; the "strong" pick on the "weak" (Alberti, 2011; Allanson et al., 2015). The "weak" must learn to fight back in order to survive; or in a school setting, bullying victims must learn to defend themselves (Allanson et al., 2015). The social capital theory of bullying theorizes that people invest in social relationships in order to access and benefit from the resources embedded within the relationships (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). In the school setting, social capital is represented by one's social status and the number of friends one has. Bullies may turn to bully perpetration as a way to gain social capital and/or improve their own social status (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). According to the social capital theory, bully perpetrators will seek out those with minimal social capital as they may have few friends and a lower social status (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Evans & Smokowski, 2016). Bullying perpetrators have an easier time gaining social capital by exerting power over their victims. Although disliked (Rodkin & Berger, 2008), bullying perpetrators are perceived as popular; this perception is a form of social capital that implies power and social status (Evans & Smokowski, 2016).

Dominance theory suggests that an individual's desire for dominance and power is the key motivating factor that drives bullying behavior (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). The theory claims that youth will engage in bullying behaviors in attempts to gain group favor while maintaining their perceived social status through repetition of the behaviors. Dominance theory is related to social norms theory, which suggests bullying behaviors are used to reinforce social norms (Blumenfeld, 2005; Hymel et al., 2014). Youth that challenges the social norms will likely experience group member resistance and bullying in order to maintain dominance (Hymel et al., 2014). Another theory that focuses on the social power dynamic is the theory of humiliation. The theory of humiliation centers on the concept that embarrassment requires action from an outside individual who creates feelings of powerlessness in the victimized individual (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). Humiliation not only impacts the victim but also the surrounding community/society. In an attempt to establish power, bullies will either physically, verbally, or relationally humiliate their victims and lower the victim's social status (Evans & Smokowski, 2016).

All the aforementioned theories are consistent with power being at the center of bullying (Hawley & Williford, 2015; Koo, 2007; Olweus, 1978; Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2006), which aligns closely with the roots and theories of traditional violence/abuse. Other forms of abuse, such as domestic violence, are also patterns of behaviors used to keep control and power over another (National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.). Like domestic violence and child abuse, bullying is also an

urgent public health matter (Cohen & Brooks, 2014), and can be conceptualized as child abuse perpetrated by children (Alberti, 2011).

Social-Ecological Theory

One of the most comprehensive and current theories of bullying is the social-ecological theory that views bullying as embedded in larger social contexts including peers, school, family, neighborhood, and the larger society (Alberti, 2001; Bauman & Yoon, 2014). Based on the Bronfenbrenner model, the social-ecological model posits bullying behavior is not only the result of an individual's characteristics but is also influenced by relationships with peers, families, teachers, neighbors, and societal influences (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). According to this theory, bullying perpetrators and targets are part of a complex system and flow from the center to the various systems that shape the person (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Studies have found that bullying perpetrators experience problems within several areas like the family, the school, and their neighborhood/community (Swearer & Espelage, 2004).

Indeed, many of the aforementioned theories can be subsumed under the social-ecological theory and help further explain the processes that occur in adult-child, peer, and other relationships. As shown in Fig. 21.1, Dr. Jean Alberti (2020), benefactor of the University at Buffalo's Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention, has represented many aspects of these complex theories in a bullying tree. The tree shows the many roots, or contributors to bullying (e.g., Darwin's theory, social learning, community, and cultural influences), conceptualizes bullying as a form of abuse and demonstrates the long-lasting consequences that parallel those of other forms of physical and emotional abuse. Also aligned with this framework, organizational culture theory also posits that a positive school climate (e.g., the quality and character of a school in relation to learning, social relationships, emotional and physical safety) is associated with less bullying behaviors than a school with a negative climate (Lee & Song, 2012; Evans & Smokowski, 2016). Indeed, many of the practices discussed next focus on what schools can and should do to prevent and intervene with bullying.

Bullying Prevention Approaches and Best Practices

Although public attention to the problem has spurred various approaches to addressing bullying, there is the most promise for using the public health framework with a multi-tiered (i.e., universal, targeted, and indicated) approach to preventing and intervening with bullying (Bradshaw, 2015; Nickerson et al., 2013; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). There is no federal legislation about bullying specifically, but schools are guided by state law and policy for bullying and related issues of harassment, intimidation, and bias. First, we provide a critical review of policy and

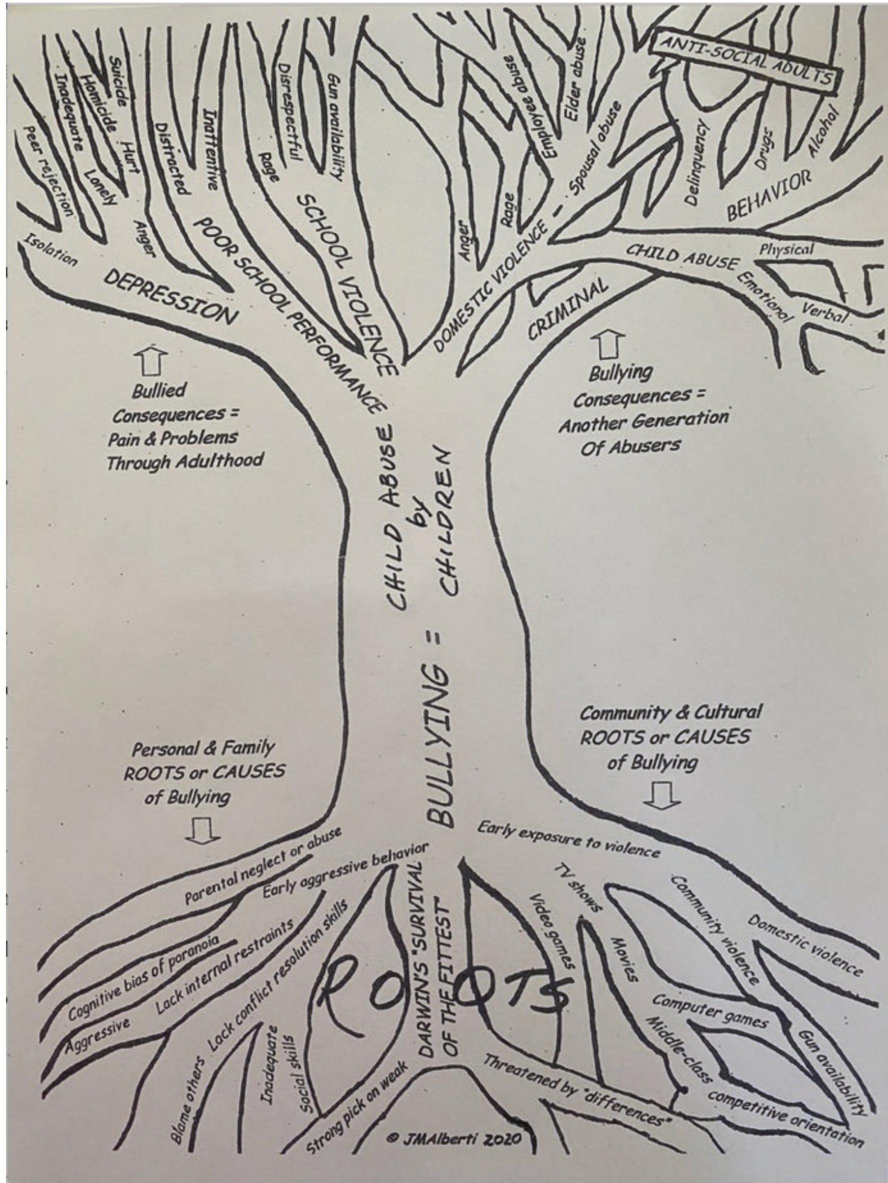

Fig. 21.1 Roots and consequences of bullying abuse. (Copyright © JM Alberti, 2020. Used with permission)

legislation regarding bullying. Then, multi-tiered bullying prevention approaches, with a focus on universal approaches implemented with all students to prevent bullying, as well as targeted and indicated prevention that work specifically with youth who are at-risk for or already involved in bullying as a perpetrator, target, or both.

Policies and Legislation

Since the late 1990s, every state in the United States has enacted legislation to address bullying, which guides school policies, actions, and systems-level interventions (Hall, 2017). Stopbullying.gov provides information on these state laws and policies, and how many of the U.S. Department of Education common components (e.g., prohibiting statement, definition, scope, protected groups, requirements for district policy, reporting and investigations, consequences, communication of policy, safeguards and supports, review and updates of policy, prevention education, and parent engagement) they include (https://www.stopbullying.gov/sites/default/files/StopBullying-Law-Policies-Regulations.pdf).

Most states require schools to implement a bullying policy, including procedures for investigating and responding (i.e., with sanctions) to bullying incidents. Some states also mandate education for students (e.g., bullying prevention programs, integrating bullying prevention in health education or social-emotional learning standards) and/or professional development for teachers and other school staff members (see https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws; Sabia & Bass, 2017).

Despite the prevalence of legislation, there have been very few studies on the effectiveness of these policies. Hall (2017) conducted a systematic review of 21 studies of educator perceptions of effectiveness and the impact of anti-bullying legislation which revealed mixed results of policies. However, consistent results were found for anti-bullying policies that explicitly protected students based on sexual orientation and gender identity which related to lower rates of victimization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning/queer (LGBTQ) students and higher rates of intervention by educators (Hall, 2017).

Three relatively recent empirical studies revealed modest correlational support between compliance with legislative mandates and reduced bullying (Cosgrove & Nickerson, 2017; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015; Sabia & Bass, 2017). Two studies (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015; Sabia & Bass, 2017) conducted cross-sectional analyses of bullying and other forms of violence from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys (YRBS) and compared with the comprehensiveness of state anti-bullying policies. Hatzenbuehler et al. (2015) found that students attending school in states with bullying policies that had at least one of the U.S. Department of Education's legislative components experienced reductions in bullying and cyberbullying (by 24% and 20%, respectively), compared to states without these legislative components. Sabia and Bass (2017) found that states with strong and comprehensive school district mandates compared to those that were less expansive and inclusive were associated with an 8–12% reduction in bullying, a 7–13% reduction in school violence, and a 9–11% reduction in students arrested for violent crimes. Cosgrove and Nickerson (2017) conducted a cross-sectional analysis of educators in New York State before and after the state's anti-bullying and harassment legislation was implemented, and they found that educators who reported their schools complied with more aspects of the state mandates also had less severe bullying and harassment and more positive school climate.

The way districts and schools develop, implement (including communication and training), and evaluate the policy is likely to contribute greatly to its effectiveness (Nickerson et al., 2013). For example, a district may adopt a policy developed by the state yet pay it only the bare minimum attention if it is perceived as an unfunded mandate that is not a high priority. Another district may prioritize this and go above the minimum requirements to: (a) develop a policy with the input of stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, school staff, and students) to increase support, personal investment, and commitment; (b) disseminate it widely to all stakeholders through newsletters, meetings, assemblies, handbooks, and websites; and (c) monitor progress, evaluate its effects, and revise continuously (Nickerson et al., 2013). The district that engages in meaningful practices around not only the letter but the spirit and intent of the law and policy, may be more likely to see a more positive school climate and reduced bullying. Indeed, according to the previously mentioned organizational culture theory of bullying, a positive school climate, where the entire school organization (e.g., teachers, staff, administrators, and parents) is committed to the mission is not only likely to decrease bullying behaviors, but also provide students with a sense of safety and support, and encourage bystander intervention (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). A school should be a learning organization that acquires and uses information from its employees and stakeholders to successfully plan, implement and evaluate its performance goals (Bowen et al., 2006; Evans & Smokowski, 2016).

Universal Prevention

These broad and systemic approaches are universal in that they are designed to reach the entire population of students in schools (as opposed to those who have already been identified as at-risk for bullying perpetration or victimization). We first provide information about bullying prevention programs and evidence of their effectiveness. Then, we describe approaches that are focused more broadly on teaching and reinforcing positive and prosocial behavior and teaching social-emotional skills, along with the evidence about their impact on bullying.

Bullying Prevention Programs A plethora of commercially available and school-created bullying prevention programs have emerged in the past two decades. Researchers have conducted several meta-analyses and systematic reviews to assess the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs, as detailed in Nickerson and Parks (2021). The first of these meta-analyses showed rather disappointing results, suggesting that bullying prevention programs, on the whole, had some effects on teacher perceptions and behaviors, but mixed or negligible effects on rates of bullying and victimization (e.g., Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Ferguson et al., 2007; Merrell et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2004). For example, Smith et al. (2004), Ferguson et al. (2007), and Baldry and Farrington (2007) found small and even negative effects of bullying prevention programs on students' bullying and victimization.

Merrell et al.' (2008) meta-analysis similarly indicated no significant reductions in bullying and victimization rates following bullying prevention programs, although there were significant increases in teacher knowledge, awareness, and perception of the ability to intervene.

More recent and comprehensive meta-analyses conducted by David Farrington, Maria Ttofi, and colleagues (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Gaffney et al., 2019; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011) have included more studies and revealed more encouraging results, with a 19–23% reduction in bullying perpetration and a 15–20% reduction in victimization. Farrington and Ttofi's (2009) study also revealed that approaches characterized by management (e.g., providing more and better playground supervision and structure, using consistent disciplinary methods, and using behavior management strategies in classrooms), anti-bullying rules for the school and classroom, training teachers, and including parents (e.g., sharing information, holding meetings, training) resulted in strongest effects. Comprehensive programs with multiple components, as well as longer programs, more intense training, greater dosage, and monitoring of intervention integrity were also associated with better outcomes (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009). A recent meta-analysis examining the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs with a parental component also found small but significant effects in reducing bullying victimization and perpetration (Huang et al., 2019).

As described in Nickerson and Parks (2021), the first comprehensive, whole-school bullying prevention program created in Norway, following several highly publicized suicides tied to bullying, was the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus, 1993). Implemented across the country of Norway, the OBPP includes comprehensive schoolwide components, such as establishing a committee, implementing anti-bullying rules, holding events, information sharing with parents, and improving playground supervision. It also includes classroom meetings and activities, and targeted interventions for perpetrators (e.g., non-hostile consequences, firm talking) and victims (e.g., providing support) of bullying. The Olweus Program has resulted in decreased student reports of bullying and other problem behaviors (e.g., fighting; Bauer et al., 2007; Limber et al., 2004; Olweus et al., 1999), increased intervention in bullying (Bauer et al., 2007; Limber et al., 2004), and improved school climate (Olweus et al., 1999) in elementary and middle schools. Results are more positive in Scandinavian countries as compared to the United States, likely of the homogeneity in these cultures and because the structure, priorities, and demands of the educational curriculum in the United States are incompatible with sustained, comprehensive efforts (e.g., frequent classroom meetings) required by the OBPP (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Smith et al., 2004).

Given these concerns about its effectiveness in the United States, two recent studies have been published of quasi-experimental extended age-cohort design of students grades 3–11 across schools in Pennsylvania that had implemented the OBPP, finding significant reductions in bullying perpetration and victimization (Limber et al., 2018; Olweus et al., 2019), including all forms of verbal, physical, indirect, sexual, and electronic/cyberbullying (Olweus et al., 2019). In addition,

longitudinal analyses over the course of the program implementation revealed increases in students' expressions of empathy for targets of bullying and decreases in their willingness to join in bullying; students also perceived that their teachers were actively addressing bullying in their classrooms (Limber et al., 2018). Effects were stronger the longer the program was in place, and the program was also more effective for elementary and middle school as opposed to high school (Limber et al., 2018; Olweus et al., 2019), suggesting that starting early with prevention is important. Program effects were typically larger for White students, although in the Olweus et al. (2019) study comparable results were found for Black students on most program outcomes, whereas effects were somewhat weaker for Hispanic students.

KiVA is a more recent and increasingly well-researched and widely implemented anti-bullying program developed in Finland (see Nickerson & Parks, 2021). KiVA includes classroom materials, skill practice with computer games, information for parents, disciplinary strategies, and a large focus on increasing the self-efficacy of bystanders to serve as allies for victims (Williford et al., 2012). Studies in Finland have found decreased victimization of students (Garandeau et al., 2014; Kärnä et al., 2011; Williford et al., 2012), particularly for students in grades 1–6 compared to grades 7–9 (Kärnä et al., 2011). Results are also improved for students whose teachers report preparing and adhering more closely to lessons (Haataja et al., 2014). Implementation and evaluation are ongoing in other countries, including but not limited to Chile, Italy, South Africa, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States (https://www.kivaprogram.net/kiva-around-the-world/). Some of the studies have been uncontrolled pre-post-test designs with convenience samples of schools that delivered the program after 1 year in both the United Kingdom (Clarkson et al., 2019) and New Zealand (Green et al., 2019). In the Clarkson et al. (2019) study, student reports of victimization were reduced from 18.1% at pre-test to 15.7% at post-test. Green et al. (2019) conducted anonymous online surveys prior to and one year after implementing KiVa with 1175 students aged 6–10 who attended 7 schools in New Zealand, finding decreases in self-reported rates of bullying, victimization, and cyberbullying victimization, although effects were stronger for girls.

In Italy, a randomized controlled trial (RCT) with more than 2000 students in grades 4 and 6 found reductions in bullying victimization and perpetration, as well as increases in pro-bullying attitudes, and the odds of students in the control schools being victimized by bullying were 1.93 greater than for students in the intervention schools (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016). Effects were greater in grade 4 compared to grade 6, and in grade 4 empathy toward victims increased where it did not in grade 6 (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016). In contrast, a recent randomized controlled trial involving over 3000 children from 21 primary schools in the United Kingdom did not find statistically significant effects on bullying victimization and perpetration or on related outcomes of child emotional and behavioral difficulties or absenteeism (Axford et al., 2020).

A three-level meta-analysis of bullying prevention programs found different developmental effects of bullying prevention programs that were implemented

broadly across K-12 schools (Yeager et al., 2015). This meta-analysis found some effectiveness for students in 7th grade or lower, no effects for students in 8th grade, and harmful effects for students in 9th–12th grades, as described in Nickerson and Parks (2021). Using the same approach (particularly teacher-delivered content) across development levels may not be appropriate for adolescents given their need for autonomy (Nickerson & Parks, 2021; Yeager et al., 2015). With adolescents, training peer leaders to shift peer norms and behaviors regarding bullying, harassment, and prejudice holds promise (Paluck, 2011; Polanin et al., 2012). For example, Paluck and colleagues (Paluck, 2011; Paluck & Shepherd, 2012) found that training peer leaders to model anti-harassment/anti-prejudice behavior (e.g., verbal condemnation, confrontation) using activities such as skits, announcements, posters, and wristbands of messaging resulted in more prosocial norms and increases in student leaders' and their peers' behaviors to confront teasing, insults, and prejudice. In addition, a meta-analysis revealed that school-based bystander intervention programs have the strongest effects in high school (Polanin et al., 2012), again suggesting the importance of attending to developmental considerations in bullying prevention (Nickerson & Parks, 2021).

Together, results from systematic reviews and meta-analyses of bullying prevention programs reveal some positive impacts on teacher attitudes and behavior and student bystander intervention, although effects on actual rates of bullying and victimization are mixed. There are some promising results for comprehensive and systematically implemented programs developed in Scandinavia, although results are more variable when implemented and evaluated outside of the contexts in which they were developed. It is clear that the comprehensiveness and fidelity of the programs make a difference, as well as their developmental appropriateness.

Given the findings about specific anti-bullying prevention programs, the success of public health models of prevention, and the need for schools to be efficient with their time, resources, and focus (e.g., it is not practical to have separate programs on bullying prevention, substance use prevention, pregnancy prevention, social-emotional and behavioral skills, etc.), most experts recommend a public health approach to the prevention of bullying (Bradshaw, 2015; Nickerson, 2017; Nickerson et al., 2013; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). This includes universal and targeted prevention approaches to teach and reinforce positive behavior and social-emotional skills (as opposed to programs that focus more specifically on bullying), which are discussed in the following sections.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) SWPBS is aimed at creating psychologically healthy educational environments (McIntosh & Lane, 2019) that facilitate healthy prosocial development and academic achievement of children (Sprague & Horner, 2012). This multi-tiered approach focuses on both staff and student behavior and is implemented to increase positive, prosocial behavior, thereby reducing problem behaviors (e.g., noncompliance, bullying; Sugai & Horner, 2006). SWPBS involves directly and proactively teaching expectations, monitoring students' behaviors and skills, and providing specific and immediate feedback across multiple settings in the school (e.g., classrooms, hallways,

cafeterias, buses; Kern et al., 2016; Sugai & Horner, 2006). SWPBS focuses on student outcomes using research-validated behavioral practices within a systems approach that includes the active collection and utilization of data to make decisions. There is a large body of research indicating that SWPBS decreases problem behaviors and discipline referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Nese et al., 2014; Noltemeyer et al., 2019) and results in a more positive school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Horner et al., 2009). In terms of the impact of SWPBS on bullying, Waasdorp et al. (2012) conducted a 4-year RCT and found that although both bullying and peer rejection increased as children progressed through elementary school grades, schools in the SWPBS condition had lower rates of bullying and peer rejection (according to teacher reports) than the control schools.

SWPBS has also been adapted to address bullying in elementary and middle schools through the Bullying Prevention in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (BP-PBIS) which uses the PBIS approach more specifically for bullying in elementary and middle schools. This approach takes the SWPBS principles and makes them specific to bullying and cyberbullying, such as implementing schoolwide rules and teaching students how to respond (Good et al., 2011). Studies have found BP-PBIS to lead to reduced bullying and victimization, decreased office discipline referrals and suspensions for bullying, and improved perceptions of safety and school climate (Good et al., 2011; Ross & Horner, 2009).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Another approach that can be applied universally to all students in schools is teaching social and emotional skills such as self-awareness, self-management, relationship awareness, and decision-making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2018). SEL is a school-based preventative approach to promote student resiliency and reduce the risk factors that may contribute to problem behaviors, including bullying perpetration and victimization (Fredrick et al., 2022). Meta-analyses of hundreds of studies of SEL programs have found that they improve academic performance and social competence, as well as decrease disruptive behavior, emotional distress, and suspension rates (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Although SEL is not designed to reduce bullying specifically, there is increasing support that teaching SEL skills can be important contributor to bullying and violence prevention efforts (Fredrick et al., 2022; Nickerson, 2018; Nickerson et al., 2019; Smith & Low, 2013).

SEL skills can be taught even to young children, and early childhood programs often emphasize teaching the whole child, including skills related to recognizing and managing emotions and getting along with others. The Early Childhood Friendship Project (ECFP) is an example of an SEL approach that includes social and emotional skills training, the use of puppets and stories to model problem-solving and resolving conflicts, and using reinforcement in preschool classrooms (Ostrov et al., 2009, 2015). RCTs have revealed that the ECFP leads to reduced relational aggression (Ostrov et al., 2009, 2015) and increased prosocial behavior (Ostrov et al., 2009).

The most well-researched SEL program examining bullying outcomes is Second Step (Committee for Children, 2001, 2008). This classroom SEL curriculum has been shown to reduce bullying by 19.3% after 6 months and 31.4% 1 year later in elementary schools (Frey et al., 2005, 2009). Students in schools who received the intervention compared to those in the control schools were also less likely to accept bullying and were more likely to have positive interactions and assume responsibility as bystanders (Frey et al., 2005). Adults in the intervention schools were also more responsive to bullying incidents than those in the control schools (Frey et al., 2005). In another RCT, Second Step has been found to result in 42% reduced physical aggression after 1 year (Espelage et al., 2013), and lower homophobic name-calling and sexual harassment after 2 years (Espelage et al., 2014). Importantly, the program has also resulted in reduced bullying perpetration for students with disabilities (Espelage et al., 2015). In addition, delinquency decreased in the first 2 years of program implementation, which then drove significant reductions from the first year to the third year in homophobic name-calling, bullying, and cyberbullying.

Targeted and Indicated Prevention for Bullying Perpetrators and Targets

Although universal or primary prevention is the ultimate goal so that youth are taught the crucial skills from a young age that will prevent bullying from occurring, given its prevalence, there is a need for targeted and indicated approaches to intervene with perpetrators and targets of bullying. Most research on bullying prevention and intervention has been conducted at the universal level, but the following section describes approaches used to intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization at an individual level, including the problems associated with these experiences.

Perpetrators Intervening with perpetrators of bullying involves applying appropriate and proportionate consequences for behavior (Thompson & Smith, 2011; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), as well as teaching and supporting prosocial skills incompatible with bullying (Chin et al., 2012). Garandeau et al. (2014) found that adult intervention through either direct sanctions (e.g., sending a strong message about bullying being wrong and needing to stop) or approaches that engaged perpetrators and bystanders in concern for the target and suggested improvements in the situation stopped bullying in 78% of cases according to reports from victims. The direct sanction approach was more effective for short-term victimization in middle and high school. The latter approach is based on the No-Blame Approach (Support Group Method; Robinson & Maines, 2008) and the Method of Shared Concern (Pikas, 2002) which involves adults meeting with bullying perpetrators and bystanders to communicate concerns, gather additional information about the situation and elicit suggestions for and commitment to making the problem better for the victim. Garandeau et al. found this to be more effective for longer-term victimization and in

elementary schools (Garandeau et al., 2014). Allen (2010a, b) implemented and evaluated a very similar method to engaging in shared concern for the victim in a high school, which led to decreased bullying and fear of being bullied, as well as increased disclosures of victimization, more empathy for victims, and improvements in staff knowledge of how to respond to bullying.

Restorative justice approaches are also being used increasingly in schools to address discipline issues (e.g., aggression, bullying) by formulating consequences to repair the harm caused to others (Smith, 2008; Song & Swearer, 2016). Although there is variability in restorative justice approaches, they all include a facilitator who uses a circle that includes the initiator of the process (typically the one who has been targeted by the bullying), others from the school or community (peers, allies, teacher), and the perpetrator(s) in order to explore the harm that occurred, the resulting needs, and the obligations to repair the damage and relationships. Unfortunately, research falls far behind the practice with regard to implementing restorative justice in schools, and its implementation, conceptualization, and effects are quite varied and in need of further study (Song & Swearer, 2016).

Another approach that offers an alternative to more problematic exclusionary school discipline is the Target Bullying Intervention Program (T-BIP; Swearer et al., 2009). In T-BIP, the bullying perpetrator engages in a 3-h session with a mental health professional that includes an assessment and a psychoeducational lesson (e.g., video and teaching about more effective ways of behaving; Strawhun et al., 2013). The professional prepare a follow-up report, meets with parents, and makes recommendations for further intervention. These recommendations are based on the specific areas of concern for the perpetrator (e.g., anger and other aggressive behaviors, hostile attribution bias), as T-BIP is built on the assumption that treating underlying conditions such as internalizing problems, aggression, cognitive distortions, and skill deficits can help reduce bullying behaviors (Swearer et al., 2009).

Targets Youth victimized by bullying are also likely to have other social difficulties with peers, such as rejection and lack of acceptance (Salmivalli et al., 1996). In addition, peers are less likely to assist bullied children who lack friendships or who have social connections with other victims (Boulton et al., 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1997). Indeed, targets of bullying are at higher risk for other forms of victimization (e.g., sexual abuse, sexual harassment, physical and emotional maltreatment), by parents and others (Duncan, 1999; Holt & Espelage, 2003).

Because targets of bullying experience other difficulties with peers, interventions often focus on social skill development or increasing support from peers. Social skills instruction for social withdrawal behavior focuses on teaching children to make friends, increasing positive prosocial strategies, regulating anxiety, and being assertive (Bienert & Schneider, 1995). Group social skills training has been implemented with targets of bullying to increase prosocial beliefs and behaviors, assertiveness, and coping skills (DeRosier, 2010; Hall, 2006). There is some evidence that social skills training can improve self-worth, decrease social anxiety, and

increase peer liking of targets of bullying (DeRosier, 2010; Fox & Boulton, 2003), although it may not impact future victimization or social skills (Fox & Boulton, 2003).

Other interventions have focused on increasing peer support for targets of bullying. Cowie and colleagues (Cowie, 1998; Cowie & Wallace, 2000; Naylor & Cowie, 1999; Sharp & Cowie, 1998) evaluated the impact of training peer helpers to offer listening and companionship to children who are targeted by bullying. This training has led to increases in the peer helpers' confidence, sense of responsibility, and communication and improvements in the overall school climate (Cowie, 1998; Naylor & Cowie, 1999). However, training peer helpers has not led to reductions in bullying rates (Menesini et al., 2003; Naylor & Cowie, 1999). In fact, in Ttofi and Farrington's (2011) meta-analysis, many programs using peer-facilitated approaches (e.g., peer-mediation, peer mentoring) resulted in *increased* victimization, possibly because without adult intervention the power dynamics between peers may allow the abuse to continue to become worse.

More success has been found in providing mentorship or support guided by adults. In a study with fourth- and fifth-grade targets of bullying, those paired with college students who visited twice weekly during lunch reported fewer instances of victimization than peers who had not participated (Elledge et al., 2010b). Non-confrontational approaches, adult-led interventions like the support group method, where adults in the school meet with the perpetrators and bystanders (i.e., potential allies to encourage support of the target), have been found to reduce victimization, decrease internalizing symptoms, and increase peers' positive perceptions of targets (Williford et al., 2012). In an exploratory qualitative study of a brief solution-focused support group for early adolescent targets of bullying, Kvarme et al. (2013) found decreased bullying and safety concerns and more peer support as reported by targets after the intervention and at a follow-up.

Interventions for Problems Associated with Bullying

Although beyond the scope of this chapter, perpetrators, and targets of bullying often have mental health or relational difficulties that contribute to or result from the bullying experiences, such as internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety, depression) or externalizing problems (e.g., anger, reactive aggression; see Nickerson & Orrange-Torchia, 2015). Therefore, evidence-based treatment approaches for these problems based on individual needs are very appropriate. For example, cognitive–behavioral interventions have been shown to reduce depression and anxiety symptoms (Albano & Kendall, 2002; Van Starrenburg et al., 2013), and have also resulted in decreased reports of distress and peer relation problems for targets of bullying (McElearney et al., 2013). Perpetrators of bullying and other aggressive behavior may also benefit from cognitive–behavioral therapy programs and techniques (e.g., teaching emotion awareness and recognition, social problem-solving, anger management), which have been shown to reduce anger, aggression, and externalizing behaviors and

improve social competence (Lochman et al., 2011; McCart et al., 2006; Sukhodolsky et al., 2004).

For perpetrators of bullying, behavior management strategies may also be helpful. Within a PBIS framework, behavior education programs including daily check-ins, checkouts, and behavioral progress monitoring have been found to be effective (McCurdy et al., 2007). Functional behavioral assessments can also be used to gather systematic information about behavior setting events, antecedents, and consequences to facilitate the development of an individualized behavior intervention plan (BIP) to identify appropriate replacement behaviors, teach alternative skills, change antecedents, and alter consequences in order to reduce problem behaviors (Goh & Bambara, 2012; Steege & Watson, 2003). In addition, one of the most well-established interventions for children with aggressive problems is parent training (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009). For example, The Incredible Years Parent Program has shown to not only improve parenting skills, but also increase children's prosocial behaviors and socioemotional competence, as well as reduce conduct problems (Menting et al., 2013; Posthumus et al., 2012). Although further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions for bullying, in particular, their success with aggression and related problems associated with bullying hold promise in helping to ameliorate this important problem.

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