

# Classroom Management, Bullying, and Teacher Practices

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## **Abstract**

*While bullying in schools has begun to receive attention, little is known about the relationship between classroom management and bullying in the classroom. The process for exploring this relationship will be a review of research and literature related to bullying in the school environment, classroom management, teacher practices, and student behavior. Research from a number of fields suggests that several variables conspire to create environments where bullying is more likely to occur. These include harsh and punitive discipline methods, lower-quality classroom instruction, disorganized classroom and school settings, and student social structures characterized by antisocial behaviors. Future directions indicate a need for preservice and in-service education on classroom management practices and student bullying. Additionally, future research should consider an investigation of the relationship between classroom management practices and student bullying, as well as further exploration of teacher bullying of students and student bullying of teachers.*

## **Introduction**

Teaching can be a daunting endeavor—for both experts and novice teachers. It is a profession that requires the ability to be responsive to new demands and changing needs. In recent years, school reform promoting high-stakes testing in the name of improving academic achievement has dominated the list of problems demanding consideration. However, there are other problems that also demand attention—for example, bullying.

Although not a new problem, attention to bullying was limited until the events at Columbine High School in April, 1999. In recent years, research has implicated teasing, harassment, and bullying in a number of the targeted school shootings that have taken place in the United States (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). Data indicate that bullying is embedded in a larger problem of school violence.

There is another perhaps related issue that has received less attention but is nevertheless a concern for educators: classroom management. Research over the past few decades has consistently indicated that new teachers feel unprepared when it comes to classroom management skills (Duck, 2007; Freiberg, 2002; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Merrett & Wheldall, 1993; Stoughton, 2007) and that they are often unprepared to function successfully in today's classrooms with regard to managing administrative tasks, curriculum, and behavior problems (Allen & Blackston, 2003; Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Kirkpatrick, Lincoln, & Morrow, 2006; Public Agenda, 2004; Thompson & Walter, 1998). Additionally, it is a well-established fact that student misbehavior is a factor in teacher burnout and the decision of novice teachers to leave the profession (Public Agenda, 2004). It seems that the need for successful classroom management skills has not diminished during a time when school reform has put the spotlight on academic testing and student achievement.

Thus, it is important to ask the following questions: What is the nature of bullying in the classroom? How is it manifested? Is there a connection between school bullying in the

classroom and classroom management? If so, what is it? Would it be beneficial to consider these two issues together? How do teachers learn classroom management skills? How do they learn about bullying? When and where does learning about these two issues intersect? Through a review of research literature related to bullying in the school environment, the purpose of this paper is to explore the relationships between classroom bullying, classroom management, and teacher practices.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This review of research approaches the issues of classroom management, bullying in the classroom, and teacher practices from a social-ecological perspective. Swearer and Espelage (2004) note that Bronfenbrenner (1979) described ecological-systems theory as purporting that “all individuals are part of interrelated systems that locate the individual at the center and move out from the center to include all systems that affect the individual” (p. 3). Drawing upon Bronfenbrenner’s ecological-systems theory (1979), Swearer and Espelage “argue that bullying has to be understood across individual, family, peer, school, and community contexts” (p. 1). Adopting this perspective assumes that the relationships of students to one another and the teacher within classrooms are reciprocal and interconnected. In other words, the actions of all members of the classroom affect the behaviors of everyone in that environment, creating a dynamic context and culture.

### **Classroom Management**

#### *What Is Classroom Management?*

A narrow view of classroom management sees it primarily as discipline and management of student misbehavior. However, successful teaching requires more than controlling student behavior. According to Evertson and Harris (1999), “the meaning of the term classroom management has changed from describing discipline practices and behavioral interventions to serving as a more holistic descriptor of teachers’ actions in orchestrating supportive learning environments and building community” (p. 60). Brophy (1999) echoed those sentiments when he stated that “the most successful teachers approach management as a process of establishing and maintaining effective learning environments” (p. 44). Finally, Larrivee (2005) noted that “classroom management is a critical ingredient in the three-way mix of effective teaching strategies, which includes meaningful content, powerful teaching strategies, and an organizational structure to support productive learning” (p. vi). Successful teachers employ strategies “for establishing rules and procedures, organizing groups, monitoring and pacing classroom events, and reacting to misbehavior” (Borko & Putnam, 1995, p. 41), and, when done well, it “looks seamless, even invisible” (Randolph & Evertson, 1995, p. 17). Despite an understanding that classroom management is a complex set of skills that includes much more than being able to influence and control student behavior, there remains an overall impression that classroom management is primarily about ‘discipline.’

#### *Discipline and Classroom Management*

Discipline’s “most typical current meaning seems to be most associated with the notion of bringing children into line” (Skiba & Peterson, 2003, p. 66); how teachers accomplish that is often determined by their assumptions about how children learn, grow, and develop. Texts on classroom management and discipline often suggest strategies that are organized into models

that reflect philosophical approaches that are commensurate with these assumptions. On the behavioristic end of the continuum is the position that humans are by nature bad and greatly in need of control, and on the humanistic end of the continuum is the position that humans are basically good and need to be guided. Teacher beliefs and assumptions about children fall somewhere along this continuum, and ultimately these philosophical assumptions are likely to influence the discipline model or management practices that a teacher chooses to employ. On the humanistic end of the continuum are democratic models that see misbehavior as an opportunity to learn. On the behavioristic end of the continuum are strategies that make use of punishment, coercion, and rewards. Thus, how a teacher manages student behavior is impacted by his or her assumptions about children, the models he or she adopts, and the strategies that are commensurate with these models.

#### *How Do Teachers Learn Classroom Management Practices?*

The first place teachers learn classroom management practices is in the very classrooms that they inhabited for thirteen or more years as students. Research indicates (Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler, & Shaver, 2005) that preservice teachers develop perceptions about classroom management from their own experiences as students, and that they bring these perceptions with them when they enroll in teacher preparation courses. Research also indicates that these perceptions persist well into teachers early years of teaching.

A second place that teachers learn classroom management practices is in the schools where they do field observations and student teaching. It can be assumed that the impact of this learning is determined by the variety and quality of what students observe in actual classrooms. If the modeling of veteran teachers is all of one sort, or if it is of poor quality, preservice teachers may have a limited set of skills to emulate, some of which may be of uncertain value.

Lastly, preservice educators may have opportunities to learn about classroom management in their college classes. Given the nature of teacher education in America, it is difficult to say how many preservice educators are exposed to high-quality classroom management information in their coursework.

In-service teachers continue to learn about classroom management, but usually in far less formal ways. Teachers may attend professional development workshops that deal with management and behavior issues, or they may initiate learning on their own, seeking out books and materials that offer insight and support for dealing with behavior and management problems in the classroom. Teachers, however, are part of communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) where they often share knowledge with one another. Learning is situated in contexts, and school is a context where adults as well as students learn from one another. "Learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally constructed world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51). Thus, teachers' beliefs, knowledge, ideas, and practices with regard to classroom management are affected by the social context of the school and by teachers' contact with one another.

### **Bullying in Schools**

#### *Bullying: Prevalence, Definitions, and Issues*

In the largest survey of bullying in schools in the United States to date (Nansel, Overpeck, Pila, Ruan, Simmons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001), 29.9% of students were found to be involved in

bullying dynamics: 13% as bullies, 10.6% as victims, and 6.3% as bully-victims.<sup>1</sup> These numbers indicate that bullying among students is a problem of serious concern in U.S. schools.

Olweus (1993) defines *bullying* or *victimization* in the following way: "A 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" (p. 9). Implicit in Olweus's definition is an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the target. Stemming from research that looks at bullying from a social systems/dialectical theory of power dynamics, Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sacco (2001) add to Olweus's conceptualization in a rather chilling expansion:

We can now redefine bullying in schools as the repeated exposure of an individual or group to negative interactions (social aggression) by one or more dominant persons. The person(s) enjoys the discomfort and shame of the victim as if in a sadomasochistic ritual enacted for the perverse public enjoyment of an audience of bystanders who do nothing and may vicariously be aroused as bullies or victims. (p. 278)

However, bullying of students by students is not the only issue that schools face. There is a limited amount of literature that addresses adult bullying of students and student bullying of adults. Twemlow and Fonagy (2005) defined a bullying teacher as "one who uses his or her power to punish, manipulate, or disparage a student beyond what would be a reasonable disciplinary procedure" (p. 2387). Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, and Brethour (2006) found in a survey of 116 elementary school teachers that 45% admitted to having bullied a student (p. 194). In a qualitative study using discourse and conversational analyses where teachers were asked about teacher bullying of students (Hepburn, 2000), at least one teacher openly admitted to having bullied students. In a recent study conducted in Ireland (James, Lawlor, Courtney, Flynn, Henry, & Murphy, 2008), researchers examined bullying at two points in time in a secondary school and found that "thirty percent of students said they were bullied by teachers at both times" (p. 160). In a rather indirect indictment of teachers who bully students, Spitalli (2005) offers ten 'don'ts' of student discipline. Of the suggestions, four directly or indirectly infer that teachers bully students. One suggestion explicitly warns teachers not to bully students as it is "unconscionable and amounts to professional malpractice" (p. 30). Another addresses the issue of teaching through coercion (p. 30). Additionally, the author sees deliberate humiliation and sarcasm as forms of bullying (p. 30–31). Although there is limited research on adult bullying of students in schools, it is clear this problem exists and that it could be linked to classroom management practices.

Likewise, there is scant information on teachers being bullied by students, although one study in the United Kingdom found that high school teachers were bullied in the previous semester, 56.4% by students at least once, 35.6% by students sometimes or more, and 9.9% by students several times a week (Andrew, 1998, p. 263). In addition, this study found that almost half of teachers who had been bullied by students responded by bullying the student back (p. 264). The frightening aspect of this is that students and teachers may get caught up in a reciprocal exchange that destroys the professionalism of the relationship and encourages mutual aggression.

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<sup>1</sup> "'Bullies' are students who have engaged in bullying and have never been victimized by bullying. 'Victims' are students who have been victimized by bullies, but have never bullied. 'Bully-victims' are students who have bullied and have been bullied" (Nansel et al., 2001).

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“Teachers are critical in determining the school climate. Thus their attitudes to power dynamics are extremely relevant” (Twemlow et al., 2006, p. 189). Although this paper does not endeavor to explore the issue of workplace bullying and the possible existence of administrator bullying of teachers, there is certainly the likelihood that some schools and districts are characterized by adult bullying of adults. School climate is probably affected to some degree by the existence of adult bullying of adults, and this dynamic is likely to affect how adults within schools and districts treat children. If, as Twemlow states above, teacher behaviors contribute to school climate, it is very likely that the treatment of teachers by administrators also affects school climate.

A social-ecological perspective requires the consideration of bullying on multiple levels, suggesting that if adults bully each other, if adults bully students, and if students bully adults, a culture can develop that supports student-to-student bullying. In other words, if adults engage in bullying one another and students, then it is reasonable to expect that students will bully one another, and sometimes adults as well.

### *Teacher Knowledge of Bullying*

Before teachers can prevent or intervene in bullying situations, they have to be able to recognize it. Research tells us that many teachers do not possess the knowledge or skills to recognize bullying behaviors among their students. Holt and Keyes (2004) report that “a greater proportion of studies have found that teachers report lower prevalence rates of bullying than students do” (p. 122), which likely indicates that students are aware of bullying to a much greater extent than teachers. In a study of prospective teachers’ understanding of bullying, Craig, Henderson, and Murphy (2000) found that “interactions involving physical aggression was labeled as bullying more often, viewed as more serious and considered more worthy of intervention than verbal aggression” (p. 14). Boulton (1997) found that teachers tended to see more egregious behaviors such as physical assault and verbal threats as bullying, but did not consider name calling, spreading mean gossip, or intimidating looks as bullying. In a very recent study, Bauman and Del Rio (2006) discovered that “preservice teachers considered relational bullying to be less serious than other forms of bullying” (p. 225). Considering the negative impact of relational aggression (Simmons, 2002), it is critical for teachers to be able to identify social and relational bullying as well as the more overt and obvious forms of verbal and physical bullying.

In a very unusual and poignant comment by researchers who observed student interactions on playgrounds, the author of a study notes the discrepancy between teacher perceptions and reality:

We learned that teachers had no problem identifying the aggressive children who were disruptive in class. These children often had difficulty managing frustration and frequently got in trouble with adults. In addition, many were favorite targets for bullying. Their exaggerated emotional responses provided an entertaining spectacle for their tormentors. From our vantage point as playground observers, we concluded that these poorly regulated children comprised the most visible, but not necessarily the most abusive aggressors on the playground. That distinction was sometimes held by model students, ones that teachers assured us were “no problem.” Based on these students’ upstanding

classroom behavior and engaging manner, few adults would suspect the cruel behavior we observed. (Frey, 2005, p. 410)

What is striking about this observation is that it seems very possible for teachers who appear to have perfectly behaved classes to provide havens for bullies that shelter them against detection. This speaks to the savvy ability of some bullies to manipulate the classroom environments of well meaning, yet unsuspecting teachers, and to hide behind facades of innocence. It is evident this is a bullying situation teachers need help recognizing.

In a survey of preservice teachers in the United Kingdom, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the importance of training on bullying (Nicolaidis, Toda, & Smith, 2002). More than half of the teacher trainees indicated that they believed information on bullying was valuable and essential. They wanted to know explicitly how to talk to bullies and targets, and they were interested in knowing how to develop a whole-school policy on bullying (Nicolaidis, Toda, & Smith, 2002).

It appears that many preservice teachers are concerned about the problem of bullying, that they often have limited knowledge of the issue, and that they desire to learn more about it before assuming their roles as classroom teachers. Likewise, in-service teachers may have a need to acquire information that reflects the true nature and extent of the problem of bullying in schools.

#### *Prevention and Intervention*

How then do teachers learn about prevention and intervention with regard to bullying? First of all, as previously noted, teachers may learn about bullying through rather informal mechanisms such as their own life experiences, through seeking out and reading materials about the problem, or by attending workshops and presentations devoted to the subject of bullying. In a more formal capacity, however, teachers may acquire knowledge through schools' adoptions of bullying prevention programs. Most, if not all of these programs, are accompanied by training aimed at helping teachers understand the problems of bullying and violence, learn how to respond to instances of bullying and violence, and modify their interactions with students such that bullying and violence within the school are likely to decrease. Very often these programs advocate policy development as well as realignment of the school or classroom code of conduct and behavior management systems. Teachers are also often called upon to teach students social skills that reduce the likelihood of interpersonal conflict. What is most interesting about these various programs is that they seldom address teachers' classroom management practices and how they may contribute to the existence of bullying within the classroom.

### **The Link Between Classroom Management and Bullying**

#### *Parenting Styles and Teaching Styles*

Research by Baumrind (1996) has greatly contributed to our understanding of parenting styles and the impact of those styles on children's development. This research suggests that bullies and victims tend to come from families where parenting is either passive or authoritarian, and that children who come from homes where they have experienced authoritative parenting are less likely to be involved in either bullying or victimization. Using

Baumrind's descriptions of passive, authoritative, and authoritarian parenting styles<sup>2</sup>, Sullivan, Cleary, and Sullivan (2004), connect these styles to teacher practices and classroom environment.

An analysis of the literature on good teaching practice and styles reveals universal support for an authoritative style. The authoritative teacher is demonstrably in control of the classroom environment, and has a clear agenda and purpose, while encouraging the individual members of the class to develop their self-determination and independence within reasonable boundaries. (p. 72)

The authors claim that in classrooms that are managed in ways other than with an authoritative style, a bullying culture can develop. Thus, Sullivan et al. (2004) suggest that there is a connection between how teachers treat their students, which is expressed through their classroom management behaviors, and the presence or absence of bullying in a classroom. Just as parenting practices create a context and culture for development that either promotes bullying or does not, so too do teachers' classroom management practices contribute to a context or culture that either promotes or discourages bullying.

#### *Negative School Environments*

All teachers want to have positive interactions with students in a classroom where students are motivated, engaged, and positive about learning, but not all teachers are able to create such an environment. In fact, there is a line of research that developed a profile of the classroom context that makes it virtually impossible to create the type of positive learning environment just described. Mayer (2002) enumerated the variables that "appear to contribute to punitive school environments that promote antisocial behavior" (p. 85):

1. an over-reliance on punitive methods of control;
2. unclear rules for student deportment;
3. lack of administrative support for staff, little staff support of one another, and a lack of staff agreement with policies;
4. academic failure experiences;
5. students lacking critical social skills that form the basis of doing well academically and relating positively to others, such as persistence on task, complying with requests, paying attention, negotiating differences, handling criticism and teasing;
6. a misuse of behavior management procedures;
7. lack of student involvement;
8. lack of understanding or appropriate responding to student differences. (p. 85)

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<sup>2</sup> *Passive* parenting is characterized by few limits, lax or arbitrary discipline, and either over- or under-involvement. (Parents either ignore children or smother them.) Children have excessive freedom. *Authoritative* parenting is characterized by reasonable rules and discipline that is caring and supportive of change. Children are treated with dignity and love is unconditional. Children learn to exercise freedom responsibly. *Authoritarian* parenting is characterized by rigid enforcement of rules and power-assertive discipline. Children have little autonomy and love is highly conditional. Children have very little if any freedom.

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In summary, it seems that coercive, chaotic, disconnected, and uncaring school environments promote or permit the existence of antisocial, bullying, and violent cultures within classrooms and schools.

### *Disruptive Behavior*

A disruptive interaction between teacher and student can sometimes trigger a chain of actions and reactions that spirals out of control, leading to coercion, chaos, and damage. In a study of teachers' perceptions of disruptive behavior, Malone, Bonitz, and Rickett (1998) wrote:

The results of this study confirmed common perceptions about disruptive behavior in the classroom. Time spent trying to control a class is time taken away from instruction. The teacher is simply less effective when instructional time is interrupted. Disruptive behavior creates teacher-student conflicts, which cause undesirable interpersonal conditions for both teachers and students. The teachers reported overwhelmingly that disruptive behavior allowed to continue on a large scale destroys teacher morale. It also creates parental dissatisfaction and a negative image of the school. For individuals, disruptive behavior contributes to low self-concept, peer conflicts, and disunity among the students. (Conclusion, ¶ 1)

Disruptive behavior in schools is not new, but the advent of inclusionary policies regarding special education students coupled with a perception that our society is increasingly antisocial and violent, has prompted educators to look for better ways of regulating student behavior in schools. One approach that has been effective is Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS), a program that grew out of the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis and "represents a major departure from traditional reactive disciplinary practices" (Safran & Oswald, 2003, p. 362). A complete explanation of PBS is beyond the scope of this paper, but what is useful for the purpose at hand is a discussion of the elements of PBS that coincide with positive discipline practices and effective teaching in schools.

PBS encourages teachers to be proactive and positive rather than reactive and negative with regards to behavioral management strategies. Included in this model is the need to structure the classroom environment so that negative behaviors don't occur, and that when they do, teachers should try to avoid the repetition of ineffective intervention strategies. Barbetta, Norona, and Bicard (2005) note that when teachers find their response to student misbehavior isn't working, instead of trying an alternative approach, they usually "try harder negatively" (p. 12). The authors suggest that teachers who find themselves in this situation try other tactics such as "redirecting, proximity control, reinforcing incompatible behaviors, changing academic tasks, and providing additional cues or prompts" (p. 13). Ultimately, repeating ineffective behavioral management strategies may cause the escalation of problem behaviors that could lead to bullying on the part of the teacher and/or the student.

Several of the major recommendations of PBS focus on classroom management practices such as the development of rules and consequences, and the teaching of social skills. "Classroom rules should be simple, specific, clear, and measurable" (Barbetta et al., 2005, p. 14), limited in number, and should be created with student input (p. 14). Rules should be stated positively, posted and reviewed routinely, and role-played and practiced so that

students know what to do to follow them. PBS also advocates teaching students social skills such as empathy, anger management, social problem solving, and conflict resolution. Assuming that students know these skills when they may not, sets them and their teachers up for reactive and negative, rather than proactive and positive, disciplinary situations.

As noted above, a contributing factor to teacher stress, classroom chaos, and interrupted learning is the atmosphere that is created when a conflict develops between a teacher and a student. Barbetta et al. (2005) noted that when students misbehave, “it often feels like a personal attack” (p. 18), and as such can set up an ill-prepared teacher for a situation where the reaction is likely to be coercive.

### *Quality Instruction and Classroom Behaviors*

As noted earlier, classroom management is not solely about managing behaviors. A critical component is the academic program and how it is delivered.

The first line of defense in managing student behavior is effective instruction ... when teachers demystify learning, achievement and behavior improve dramatically. Examples of how to demystify learning include students establishing his or her learning goals, student monitoring his or her own learning, involving students in developing classroom rules and procedures, and relating lessons to students’ own lives and interests. (Barbetta et al., 2005, p. 17)

Carolyn Everston, creator of Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP), a professional development program for teachers, has addressed the issue of how classroom management looks in a learner-centered environment (Evertson & Neal, 2006). The authors state that “a redefinition of management must address the interrelationship of management and instruction and how these relate to educational goals” (p. 1). They see the purpose of learning as threefold: (1) to foster academic growth and development, (2) to promote moral development through self-regulation and a sense of responsibility, and (3) to promote social interconnectedness (pp. 3–5). Evertson and Neal (2006) note that learner-centered classrooms are characterized by flexible room arrangements; varied social forums that allow for small- and large-group work, and independent work; multiple sources of information (as opposed to the teacher acting as the sole source of knowledge); and a more fluid and effective use of time (pp. 6–8).

In classrooms like this, rules such as ‘raise your hand when you want to talk’ don’t make sense, so teachers are required to develop a management system that matches the learning activities that occur in their classrooms. These systems create a positive dynamic that “may look seamless, yet is carefully orchestrated at a complex level” (Evertson & Neal, 2006, p. 8). These systems include strategies such as “community building, establishing classroom rules and norms, and practicing classroom procedures” (p. 8) at the very beginning of the school year. They also embrace an “approach to classroom management [that shifts] from teacher direction and control to an emphasis on student engagement, self-regulation, and community responsibility with teacher guidance” (p. 8).

Developments in the learning sciences indicate that the transmission model of learning is no longer meeting the needs of students (National Research Council, 2000). Learner-centered classrooms focus on high-quality learning activities, proactive vs. reactive academic and

behavioral responses to students' needs, and a shared responsibility for learning, classroom organization, and behavior. In essence, these classrooms are ones where authoritative teaching is occurring.

### *Bullying and Classroom Management*

What about the problem of bullying as it relates to classroom management? Roland and Galloway (2002) studied the impact of classroom management and bullying. Not only did they discover that classroom management correlated with whether bullying took place among students, but they also discovered that there was a mediating variable related to whether bullying occurred at all. That mediating variable was the social structure of the class (Roland & Galloway, 2002). Social structure included the informal relationships among students and encompassed "friendship, support, attraction, isolation, power and relations between subgroups" (p. 302). It is interesting to note that the variable 'management' was created by measuring and summing four teacher traits or practices: "caring, teaching, monitoring and intervention" (p. 302). Although a correlation study, the authors state "that it makes it reasonable to argue, but does not necessarily demonstrate, that our own results of quite strong relations between management, the social structure of the class and amount of bullying have a parallel causal structure" (p. 310). The findings of this study suggest that when teachers care about students, when they organize classrooms such that positive student relationships develop, and when they manage learning and behavioral issues in positive, educative ways, students are far less likely to engage in or experience bullying. It seems that there is perhaps a bidirectional and reciprocal interaction among all three variables: management practices, bullying, and the social structure of the class.

In a study done in Japan, the author came to a somewhat similar conclusion regarding bullying and its relationship to the social environment:

These findings suggest that bullying is not a simple problem which occurs in relations between bully-student and bullied-student, but it is a complicated problem which must be solved by means of the development of the social environment of the class, that of the school, and that of the home as well as that of society. (Kikkawa, 1987, p. 29)

Research from several lines of study suggests connections between classroom management, bullying in classrooms, teacher practices, and classroom social structure; yet, these connections have not been fully explored. Future research on bullying in schools should consider investigating these other contextual variables as they may offer new insights into how to prevent or reduce school bullying.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this paper was to consider whether there is a link among three variables: classroom management, school bullying, and teacher practices. Classrooms and schools that use coercion and punishment to deal with inappropriate student behavior tend to have negative, hostile environments. Additionally, schools and classrooms that are authoritarian and are characterized by rigid, adult-centered authority tend to use more coercion and punishment to get students to behave. Furthermore, schools and classrooms where teaching is of low quality or does not reflect current knowledge regarding learning and

best practices, have more student problems, are more likely to be authoritarian, and are more likely to attempt to influence student behavior through coercion and punishment. Lastly, the social structure and dynamics of schools and classrooms of this sort promote an environment that makes bullying and victimization possible.

### *Implications*

Bullying doesn't occur in a vacuum. A host of factors contribute to its existence, and one of them is how teachers manage their classrooms and respond to inappropriate student behavior. School reform that encourages learner-centered classrooms based on what we know about new developments in the learning sciences is a positive step. Efforts to help teachers increase their depth of content knowledge, as well as their pedagogical content knowledge (i.e. present content in ways that actively engage learners and promote deep understanding as opposed to rote memorization), are also important contributors to an environment that discourages bullying. However, unless teachers come to the classroom with skills that allow them to establish a culture that proactively minimizes student behavior problems and at the same time allows them to intervene in positive, educative, effective ways when students are disruptive, there is likely to be an environment that is predisposed to bullying problems.

### *Future Directions*

In large part, the locus of change lies in preservice and in-service teacher education. Those responsible for preparing teachers to teach and those who develop and provide professional staff development for educators need to address these issues.

*Preservice teacher education.* Research on preservice preparation of teachers indicates that graduates need more exposure to course content and involvement in field experiences that help them develop effective behavior management skills. In the past, this topic has often been relegated to either methods courses or psychology courses on child or adolescent development. In most cases, teacher education students don't learn what they need to know. Additionally, it is important for colleges and universities to place students in schools and classrooms where they will see educators modeling positive and respectful behavior management strategies. Preservice teachers will learn all the wrong things if they observe and imitate teachers who misuse their power, teach via skill-and-drill methods, use sarcasm, or bully students.

Preservice teachers also need field experiences that allow them to observe high-quality teaching right from the beginning of the school year. Too often, field experiences don't allow novices to see the preparation and groundwork that successful teachers lay during the first few days of school. When it looks as easy as some teachers make it appear, preservice teachers form an impression that classroom organization is simple and effortless.

*In-service teacher education.* Professional development for in-service education is moving away from stand-alone, outside expert offerings, and moving toward a model that aligns with the new science of learning. To that end, peer coaching and mentoring are two vehicles that may provide teachers with the necessary structure and support to learn about, practice, and reflect on changing their classroom management practices. It goes without saying, however, that such efforts need to be supported by informed and progressive administrators who understand current research and who themselves foster communities of learners among their staff members.

### *Future Research*

Research is severely lacking in several areas: teacher-to-student bullying, student-to-teacher bullying, and adult-to-adult bullying in schools. Each of these dynamics needs to be studied to discover how they affect the school environment and contribute to bullying in schools.

Much more needs to be known about teachers who bully students: why they do it, what triggers it, what kinds of environments they teach in, how they interact with colleagues, what their beliefs are about students and learning, why they chose teaching as a career, what their goals are for themselves and their students, and what role leadership plays in the schools they teach in. The challenge, of course, will be to find schools, administrators, and teachers who will welcome research that may expose their weaknesses.

On the other hand, teachers are likely to welcome research that develops more knowledge around students who bully teachers. Certainly it would be helpful to understand the context in which students bully adults, how and why they do it, and what effect it has on the environment of the school and classroom. Research along this line may provide insights into more effective ways to interact with these students and shape their behavior in more positive ways.

If adults in school bully one another, it is likely to affect how the adults treat children. It would be useful to explore the role of adult behaviors toward one another and how that behavior impacts school climate and problems with bullying. However, research in this area may be challenging to conduct, as schools where adults exhibit these traits may not be receptive to investigation of adult behaviors.

Knowledge of teacher practices, particularly around pedagogy, indicates that best practices include learner-centered environments where teachers foster student autonomy through engaging learning activities. It may be that classrooms of this sort have less bullying than traditionally organized classrooms. Educators would greatly benefit from a line of research that explores the relationship between teacher practice and pedagogy and bullying in the classroom.

Lastly, it would be very helpful to expand our knowledge of the connections between classroom management practices and bullying in schools. This paper has built a case for such a connection, but it rests on numerous, somewhat disparate sources of information. More direct research would certainly be beneficial.

### **Conclusions**

Bullying begets bullying and aggression begets aggression. When a child disrupts a class and challenges a teacher, publicly embarrassing or belittling him or her, the teacher may react with anger, hostility, and coercion. In other words, when bullied, some teachers bully back. In some schools, teachers themselves feel under attack in rather the same way from administrators or parents. Concurrently, in many schools there is a serious problem of peer bullying that can go undetected by adults, but this may be a significant contributor to school violence and a negative school climate. Regardless of the genesis of bullying, antisocial, or violent behavior, the reaction in schools is often to make more rules, increase the severity of punishment for rule infractions, and expel more students from school, all of which exacerbate the problems that educators are trying to solve. These problems may also be compounded by teacher practice and pedagogy that does not reflect current knowledge of learner-centered

environments and where students are more likely to experience skill-and-drill methods. Solving these problems requires that we deal successfully with the convergence of classroom management, bullying in classrooms, and effective teaching practices, and in order to do this, research needs to investigate how these variables are reciprocally related to one another. Lastly, those who facilitate teacher learning need to discuss these issues in preservice and in-service education.

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