

Book Review: Zins, J. E., Elias, M. J., & Maher, C. A. (Eds.) (2007). *Bullying, victimization, and peer harassment: A handbook of prevention and intervention*. New York: The Haworth Press. 412 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-7890-2218-9; ISBN-10: 0-7890-2218-4 (hardback); ISBN-13: 978-07890-2219-6; ISBN-10: 0-7890-2219-2 (softback).

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Bullying, victimization, and peer harassment provides a collection of theoretical and empirical articles written primarily by North American researchers. The book is divided into five sections. Section I on “Theory and Conceptual Issues” contains two chapters. The first chapter, by Zins, Elias, and Maher, provides a brief overview of the volume and a summary of directions for research and practice that, although not groundbreaking, may serve to focus the efforts of someone new to the field. The authors suggest, for example, that more attention be given to systemic factors such as school climate in order to reduce bullying.

Sveinsson and Morris (Chapter 2) provide an overview of conceptual and methodological issues relevant to the field of bullying. They prepare us for the rest of the volume by underscoring the problems of defining and measuring bullying, and the lack of empirically validated antibullying programs. Although many antibullying programs have been based on the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* and have had their outcomes measured using the *Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire*, Sveinsson and Morris question the effectiveness of the Olweus program and the psychometric properties of the Olweus instrument. They question the validity of Olweus’ assumption that children can retain and apply a definition of bullying presented to them before answering questions about bullying.

Section II on “Empirical Research and Other Important Evidence” contains seven previously published articles. All of these are reports of studies that follow a positivist, quantitative paradigm, and primarily involve collection and analyses of survey data. The results of these studies highlight the prevalence and negative consequences of victimization and provide evidence of causal influences.

Paul and Cillessen (Chapter 3) investigate peer victimization in early adolescence using a four-year longitudinal design. Risk factors for victimization in adolescence included anxious-withdrawn comportment or disruptive behaviour in elementary school. Protective factors included academic and social competence.

Nansel, Haynie, and Simons-Morton (Chapter 4) explore middle school adjustment in relation to involvement in bullying. Their survey indicates that sixth grade students who were classified as bullies, victims, or bully-victims showed poorer school adjustment than other students, and that these differences persisted over time. Students who reported that they had been victimized had a more negative perception of their school’s climate compared to bullies and uninvolved students.

In Chapter 5, Swearer and Cary examine middle school students’ perceptions and attitudes towards bullying. Students reported that bullying occurs in classrooms, hallways, in the gym, the cafeteria, and outside during recess and after school. When asked why they thought some students might be bullied, external attributes such as being weak or looking different were cited. Most students reported that school staff did not know bullying was going on.

Holt and Espelage (Chapter 6) investigate the prevalence and effects of victimization on high school students. Many individuals reported multiple forms of victimization such as sexual harassment, physical or emotional abuse in dating relationships, and childhood sexual abuse. Those who had experienced multiple forms of victimization tended to feel disconnected from the school and have poorer psychological adjustment.

Aggressive behaviour and friendship patterns in multicultural classrooms are explored by Strohmeier and Speil (Chapter 7) in their study of immigrant children in Austria. Their survey revealed that Austrian children were more likely to be nominated as either victims or bullies than immigrant children. Turkish/Kurdish children were found to have fewer friends, were lonelier, and less accepted by their peers compared to their Austrian and Yugoslavian classmates.

In Chapter 8, Graham, Bellmore, and Juvonen examine differences between self-identified and peer-identified victims of bullying. Survey data collected from sixth grade students indicate that those who self-identified as victims of bullying were more likely to have poorer psychological adjustment, whereas students who were nominated by others as victims had higher levels of peer rejection and more negative teacher ratings. Those who felt like victims and were perceived as such by peers had the worst outcomes.

Goldbaum, Craig, Pepler, and Connolly (Chapter 9) use survey data collected three times over two years, from 9-14 year olds, to explore victimization trajectories. They identify four distinct groups of children: nonvictims (consistently low levels of victimization), desisters (high levels of victimization that decreased over time), late onset victims (increasing levels of victimization), and stable victims (consistently high levels of victimization). Analyses of group differences indicate that anxiety and poor friendship quality may lead to subsequent peer victimization.

Section III on “Empirically Validated and Promising Preventive and Supportive Interventions” contains a collection of six original articles. Program overviews and evaluation results are provided for several programs that may be of interest to school professionals.

Freeman and Mims (Chapter 10) provide an evaluation of the *Get Real About Violence* (GRAV) program. Results indicate that the students who participated in GRAV were more likely to view adults as more helpful and supportive of reporting aggression. Those who did not participate in the intervention were more likely to express an intention of responding aggressively to violence.

Atria and Spiel (Chapter 11) present an overview of the *Viennese Social Competence* training program which is based on social information processing theory and designed for at-risk teens. A randomized control trial was conducted at a vocational school in Vienna, Austria. Program implementation was monitored and positive effects on democracy variables (i.e., equality, information, participation, and diversity) were found immediately after training but did not endure at follow-up four months later. Only positive trends were found on the aggression variables.

Leff et al. (Chapter 12) provide a thorough description of the *Friend to Friend* (F2F) program for relationally aggressive girls and a brief overview of an evaluation that is currently underway. The F2F program has a strong theoretical framework including social information processing theory and ecological theory and was developed using a participatory action research framework. African American girls from grades 3-5 were the target population, and had an opportunity, along with their teachers, to give the researchers feedback on various aspects of the program. The program involves unique features such as culturally sensitive cartoon hand-outs and videotaped examples. The evaluation currently underway includes a randomized control design, multiple outcome measures, multiple informants, and methods of monitoring program implementation.

Teglasi, Rahill, and Rothman (Chapter 13) provide an overview of the theoretical underpinnings for a story-guided intervention (STORIES) adapted for students identified with emotional disorders. The authors present a summary of a study that compared outcomes from STORIES with outcomes from the *Skillstreaming* intervention and a nonspecific counselling intervention. Students in the STORIES group showed more favourable scores on problem behaviours such as aggression, hyperactivity, anxiety, and depression, as well as more positive outcomes on cognitive process measures.

Chapter 14 by Maury Nation describes interventions specifically aimed at victims of bullying. Victim-focused interventions include Shared Concern Method/No-Blame Approach, bully courts, conflict resolution and peer mediation, social skills and assertiveness training, and miscellaneous therapies such as art therapy and martial arts training. These interventions have shown potential but remain to be empirically validated.

DeRosier (Chapter 15) outlines the components of the *Peer Connections* initiative and describes an evaluation of a social skills intervention called SSGRIN (i.e., Social Skills *GR*oup *IN*tervention). SSGRIN is based on social

learning and cognitive-behavioural techniques specifically designed for children experiencing rejection and bullying at school. DeRosier presents a clear description of the ten-session program and provides empirical evidence of program efficacy.

Section IV, "Guidelines for Practice: Professional Issues and Legal Considerations", begins with three reprinted articles and ends with one original article. Rodkin and Fischer (Chapter 16) explore whether boys' harassment of girls is a peer-sanctioned form of aggression in schools. They draw parallels between the dynamics of domestic violence and peer sexual harassment and suggest ways that school officials can deal more effectively with the problem of sexual harassment.

Young and Mendez (Chapter 17) provide a very clearly written, well organized article containing a wealth of information on sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined, prevalence estimates are provided, developmental issues are identified, and legal issues are discussed. The authors also provide practical information on primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategies.

Vaillancourt, Hymel, and McDougall (Chapter 18) examine links between bullying, power, and social status using survey data from grade 6-10 students. Results indicate that although most bullies were viewed as aggressive and were disliked by peers, some were seen as popular and powerful. These powerful bullies were seen as having leadership qualities, were socially popular, and had other perceived assets such as stylish clothes, physical attractiveness, and were athletic.

Card, Issacs, and Hodges (Chapter 19) present a wealth of information on factors associated with school victimization organized under five categories: personal, academic, interpersonal, familial, and school context. There are over 125 references attached to this chapter, making it a useful resource.

Section V on "School-wide Approaches" provides overviews of two comprehensive programs that may be of interest to school professionals. Woods, Coyle, Hogg, and Leadbeater (Chapter 20) provide an overview of the WITS ("Walk away", "Ignore", "Talk", "Seek help") program and a summary of study results. This program has multiple components, including curricula designed especially for teachers, police, librarians, university athletes, and parents. A manual is accessible through the internet. Study results indicate decreased levels of victimization in schools with this program compared to control schools.

Knoff (Chapter 21) describes project ACHIEVE, a program that has been designated evidence-based by several organizations including the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program. Project ACHIEVE involves primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention elements and provides a blueprint to help schools organize a comprehensive, school-wide approach to teasing, taunting, bullying, harassment, and aggression. The Stop & Think Social Skills Program is described as a method of teaching pro-social skills. Issues such as accountability, consistency, student and staff characteristics, environmental characteristics, incentives and consequences, and resource utilization are also discussed.

As a doctoral student whose thesis focuses on bullying, I was disappointed that much of this book is a compilation of previously published work. For example, chapters 1, 3-9 and 16-18 were previously published in the *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 19(2) (2003) and simultaneously published in a book edited by Elias and Zins (2003). Although this book does not provide many new ideas for a scholar already familiar with the academic literature on bullying, it would definitely serve as a good introduction for those new to this area of research.

School professionals might find this book to be a useful collection of articles related to bullying, victimization, and peer harassment. Some readers, however, may find that several of the articles are written in an academic style that is not particularly user-friendly. For example, many chapters report inferential statistics such as *t* tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that may be of more interest to researchers than to teachers or social workers wanting practical information for schools. Some of the articles, however, do include visual representations of the data (e.g. bar charts, line graphs) that make the research results easier to understand.

The intended audience for this book is not clear. If it is intended for scholars, then more recent research should have been presented; if it is aimed at practitioners, then the articles could have been written in a more accessible style.

The studies in this volume were conducted using a quantitative, positivist paradigm. The rigor of some of these studies, however, may be questioned. For example, one program evaluation lacked pre-test data (i.e. Freeman & Mims), and several researchers (i.e. Swearer & Cary; Holt & Espelage; Freeman & Mims; Atria & Spiel) based their conclusions on the results of surveys administered in only one school. Inclusion criteria for empirical research could have been provided to ensure that only the most rigorous studies were included in this book. It may also have been valuable to include works undertaken using a more qualitative, interpretivist paradigm where richer, more detailed descriptions could be provided.

The reader should also be cautioned that the articles presented in this volume may not provide a representative sampling of research in this field. All but two of the chapters (i.e., Chapters 7 & 11) were written by North American researchers conducting research in either the U.S. or Canada, thus making the contents less generalizable to a world audience.

References

Elias, M. J., & Zins, J. E. (Eds.) (2003). *Bullying, peer harassment, and victimization in the schools: The next generation of prevention*. New York: The Haworth Press.